University of Alberta

Visions of Aboriginal Education

by

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Abstract

This study is an examination of visions of First Nation members on how Aboriginal languages, cultures, and histories can be incorporated into the design of a First Nation school program. Through interviews and discussions, the perspectives of a group of Aboriginal people are recounted. This study shows the importance of band-controlled schools reflecting the program needs and wants of the Aboriginal community rather than those that mainstream society or governing educational bodies deem essential. In this case the participants emphasized the importance of academic success, cultural content in the curriculum, and the community taking the lead in promoting Cree language and culture, in particular with highly spiritual components.

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CHAPTER I:

VISIONS OF ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Background

The focus of my research emerged from my experiences as an Aboriginal person and a teacher. I am of mixed heritage. My Cree ancestors can be traced back to the Potskins and Deslarais families of the Slave Lake area, and my German ancestors are the Mandels and Jestls.

I am very fortunate to have come from a family that values and promotes education. From elementary school on through university, school has always been a priority for me. However, from the time that I was young, I noticed many Aboriginal youth—relations, current and former students—not finishing their schooling. I saw this while I was growing up, and now I see the same situation as an adult and a teacher. It was not because they were incapable intellectually, but rather, I realized over the years that there are many issues that may hamper and impede many Aboriginal youth in meeting their potential in school. Some of these issues are language barriers, poverty, and lack of identity and confidence in themselves. I have seen students who have grown up in a Cree language setting having difficulty reading textbooks at their grade level, students who come to school hungry and not properly dressed for the weather, and students who imitate other cultures rather than being proud of or even recognizing their own Aboriginal heritage.

As a teacher, I am always concerned with the success of students; however, I have a particular interest in the overall educational success of

Aboriginal students, youth, and the Aboriginal community as a whole. My teaching career is rooted in Aboriginal communities. I am certain that the education of Aboriginal peoples plays a significant role in my career and life. I want Aboriginal students to be well rounded. They need to be grounded in a strong, positive Aboriginal identity. Aboriginal students need to know who they are and where they come from in order to know where they are going. I also believe that students need an education that will enable them to successfully participate in mainstream society as well as in their own communities. I believe that if we can balance the school curriculum with basic academic subjects and essential cultural teachings and model the community's values and beliefs, our youth will be more successful in school and in life. It is my personal and professional ties with Aboriginal students and youth that have led to my concern with Aboriginal students' intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical achievements.

During my teaching career, I have observed a great deal of discussion and debate by educators and Aboriginals on the role of Cree language, culture, and history in schools. These discussions have contributed to ideas on how band-controlled schools should be structured. Parents and community members have discussed what is or is not appropriate to be taught in schools, and their discussions include suggestions on how schools ought to be structured, such as integrating all Cree cultural teachings, limiting Cree cultural content, or eliminating all Cree content from the school program altogether. Aboriginal people have expressed the need to prepare their children to participate and succeed in mainstream society. Many have also expressed the need for children to have a strong, positive Aboriginal identity as well as a strong formal education. It is from these discussions with various members of the community that this work evolved, focusing on the expectations that Aboriginal parents and community members hold in relation to their schools.

Purpose and Focus of the Study

There is a definite need to develop a solid education program for Aboriginal children. It is estimated that by 2017 "First Nations students will represent between 25% and 50% of the entire elementary student population in several provinces and territories" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002b). Other statistics from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (2002a) indicate that the high school graduation rate for on-reserve First Nations students was only 32.1% in the 1999-2000 school year (p. 30), which is lower than the national average of 76.9 in 2000 and 2001 and 75% in 2002 and 2003 (Statistics Canada, 2005). These statistics suggest that there is something lacking in First Nations education.

There have been many changes and advances in the field of Aboriginal Education in the past approximately 30 years. This has been a slow but continuous process. Numerous improvements have been made in the hiring of more Aboriginal teachers, in enhanced curriculum, in Aboriginal language classes, and in the transfer of the administration of education to Aboriginal education authorities in reserve or First Nation communities (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Apart from these improvements, there is still much to be done and many issues to be dealt with to improve education for Aboriginal students.

In many Aboriginal communities there is a consensus on the need for band-controlled schools. However, there is no clear-cut agreement on the schools' vision and programming. The issue of programming has caused some communities to become divided at the expense of their children's education. One such community is Wapoose Lake, a small lakeside community in northwest Canada. Central to the issue in Wapoose Lake is the role that Cree language and culture should play in their band-controlled school.

In order to develop a program and curriculum for a band-operated school, the governance body as well as the various interest groups of the Aboriginal community need to be involved in the design. Aboriginal Elders, parents, band administrators, and students are some of the interest groups who need to be given a voice. By promoting a relevant education system that is developed from the various points of view that exist in a community, a school can in fact be a strong positive contributor to student success.

It is from these thoughts and observations that I have been encouraged to examine the visions of First Nation members on how Aboriginal languages, cultures, and histories can be incorporated into the design of a First Nation school program. This study will present data and analyses based on the views of members of one Aboriginal community.

Significance of the Study

I believe that the issues raised and the discussion emanating from this study will provide assistance in three main areas. First, they may offer insights to school administrators, the chief and council members, curriculum developers, and community members who are involved in developing Aboriginal educational policies and curriculum or in revitalizing Cree language, culture, and history in the community. It may make them more aware of the possible issues that arise in an Aboriginal community in the design and implementation of any kind of Aboriginal language, culture, or history program.

Second, the value of this study is to improve the quality of education for Aboriginal youth by emphasizing that the education programming needs to reflect Aboriginal communities' needs, values, and beliefs. Education programs are often implemented or developed without consultation with the community that will be impacted by the programs of the school. The result here is usually one of low support for the school from its own community groups as well as low attendance and registration.

Finally, this study will add to similar research and theory referred to in the literature review by proposing that band-controlled schools reflect the program needs and wants of the Aboriginal community rather than those that mainstream society or governing educational bodies deem essential.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

This study is delimited to the perspectives of a selected group of Aboriginal community members living in an Aboriginal community within the province of Alberta. During the participant selection process, I chose only participants who are or have in the past been actively involved in the community band-operated school. However, this precluded the perspectives of those community members who have opinions about the school but are not actively involved in school activities or functions. Furthermore, I chose to seek the perspectives of many community groups rather than to focus on one community group because I sought a broad picture of what the community wanted rather than a limited study of the views of one community group. A further delimitation is that I chose only two participants from each identified community group. Because this study was designed to identify the opinions of several community groups in one Aboriginal community, it cannot be expected to represent the opinions of other community members or groups in this community or those of other Aboriginal communities. I will speak to the potential applicability of the broader findings, however, at the end of the thesis.

Limitations

In this study the main limitation is that it is difficult to generalize the findings across many contexts. Although there is a good chance that the community members interviewed in this study can speak to a certain degree for other community members in the same community or even in other similar communities, it cannot be claimed that they represent the perspectives of all Aboriginal communities. Perspectives and issues around the Cree language, culture, and history programs in school will vary from community to community, family to family, and individual to individual. Generalizations can be made only for my participants in their own communities. The individuals' interviews might only speak for themselves and might not be representative of the full, identified group either. Nevertheless, the interview approach is a very valuable mode of inquiry in that it enables the interviewer the possibility to "gain additional information about various phenomena" (Berg, 2001, p. 70). Depending on the type of interview, the interviewer can explore a participant's thoughts and opinions beyond the scope of the initial set of possible questions in the interview.

Definition of Terms

The following key terms are defined in this study to ensure that the particular meaning intended in this study is clear to the reader.

Aboriginal: This term generally refers to all Indian (status and nonstatus), Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada as defined in *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future* (Assembly of First Nations, 1988, p. 6). *Aboriginal* in this thesis will be used interchangeably with *Indigenous*, *First Nations*, *Native*, and *Indian*.

Culture: *Culture* refers to the way of life of a group of people. It is the customs, history, values, and language that make up the heritage of a group of people and contribute to that person's or those people's identity (Assembly of First Nations, 1988, p. 6).

Band-controlled school: *Band-controlled school* is a common term that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (2002a) used to refer to a school located on an Indian reserve and administered by the local Indian band. Other terms used throughout this study and in other writings are *band-run school*, *band-operated school*, *band community school*, *First Nations school*, and *locally controlled school.*

Traditional living: *Traditional living* includes food preparation, arts and crafts, shelter, clothing, and other activities that are done in a traditional way. These activities include smoking fish, smoking meat, beading moose hide, making moccasins, and setting up a tipi. Traditional living includes primarily those activities that Aboriginal peoples have carried out through past years and that they still carry out in order to survive.

Personal Assumptions

The development of this study was influenced by three assumptions about education and Aboriginal people that are based on my own experiences and understandings of school and community interactions. First, I assume that school programs with the interests of Aboriginal students in mind can play an important role in promoting a strong, positive Aboriginal identity while at the same time promoting equally strong academic performance. I believe that this enables students to maintain their Aboriginal identity and succeed in mainstream society. Second, I assume that Aboriginal people who are advocates for and practice all aspects of Cree culture in the community will also advocate for all aspects of culture to be taught in the school setting, including spiritual ceremonies and rituals. I thought that the school program and activities would be an extension of what the community practices and believes. The school would not be an isolated segment of the community but, rather, would be embraced as a part of the community. Third, based on my experiences in this community, I assume that Aboriginal community members who have strong ties with an organized religion such as Pentecostal, Anglican, "born-again" Christian, or Roman Catholic would not advocate teaching any Cree culture in the school setting because some of these faith practices may not be similar to those of traditional Cree culture.

Subquestions

Three subquestions emanating from my research question need to be considered in this study. Addressing these subquestions places me in a better position to discuss my research question:

1. How is culture defined by the participants?
2. How is Native spirituality defined by the participants?
3. What role do community members see the school playing in their community?

CHAPTER II:

Literature Review

Introduction

I have found numerous studies that address a variety of issues within Native education. All of the literature that I reviewed reiterated the fact that band-controlled schools and public schools with a high Aboriginal population should reflect the academic, cultural, and emotional needs of their Native constituents rather than simply the requirements of mainstream schooling policies. The claim is that changes in these areas will improve the quality of education for Native students, and, consequently, more Native students will graduate from high school. Higher rates of high school graduation may result in higher numbers attending postsecondary institutions, and more students demonstrating positive identities and successful educational experiences at all levels. In this chapter, I will provide a brief review of some of this literature.

The studies and articles that I examined endorsed many similar recommendations to improve education programs to better serve Aboriginal youth. This literature, in fact, clearly demonstrated a general consensus on what must be promoted in schools with a predominant Native population. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) supported many of the same findings of this literature review. The commission had many sources from which to draw its recommendations; they included public hearings, round table discussions and commissioned researched studies. A comprehensive list of the commissions' sources is available on a CD-ROM called *For Seven Generations: an Information*

Legacy of the Royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Approximately 350 studies were commissioned for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples; a complete bibliography of these can be found in Appendix D, volume 5 of the Commission's report. The Royal Commission also examined and compared 22 education reports (Appendix A) on Aboriginal education. These reports were written between 1966 and 1992. Commenting on the education reports, the Commission stated, "The recommendations of these reports, many of them excellent, show remarkable consistency" in their consideration of the needs of Native students (p. 440). The research points out that, if Native education is to improve, the following areas must be examined further: the relationship between the education system and the transmission of culture, parental and community involvement in education, pre-service and cross-cultural training for teaching staff, Elders involvement in education, Native teachers, education programs and curriculum, and styles of teaching and learning. This chapter will begin with some comments on the historical background or evolution of Native education in Canada and then move to a discussion of the identified topics mentioned above.

Historical Overview of Native Education

This summarized historical overview is not a comprehensive list of events from the beginnings of formal Native education but, rather briefly gives the context in which Aboriginal peoples have gone from assimilationist education with no input from Aboriginal people to assuming control of their own First Nations schools. Although this section will focus on the period from the late 1960s to the present, European-style education had its beginnings in Canada around the mid-1600s with the purpose of indoctrinating Aboriginal people into the Christian, European worldview (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). At first, this objective was accomplished by missionaries with the financial aid of the federal government. During this time, "assimilationist education predominated in schools established under government or church authority" (p. 436). These schools for assimilation were generally characterized by high failure rates, poor school-community relations, negative attitudes towards Native cultures, and the prohibition of Native languages (Hampton, 1995). The result of this assimilationist education was "the gradual loss of these [Aboriginal] worldviews, languages, and cultures and the creation of widespread social and psychological upheaval in Aboriginal communities" (Battiste, 1995, p. viii).

The turning point for those interested in Native education came in 1969 with the federal government's announcement of a new policy, the White Paper Policy, introduced by former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and former Minister of Indian Affairs, the Honourable Jean Chrétien. This policy essentially wanted "all legislative and constitutional bases of discrimination to be removed; Indians would receive the same services, including education, available to members of the dominant society. The Department of Indian Affairs would be abolished and the reserve system dismantled" (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1986, p. 15). With regard to education services specifically, the government was prepared to

> propose to the governments of the provinces that they take over the same responsibility for Indians that they have for other citizens in their provinces. The take over would be accompanied by the transfer to the provinces of federal funds normally provided for Indian programs, augmented as may be necessary. (Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1969, p. 6)

The intended educational outcome of this federal government policy was the integration of Native children from reserves into nearby provincial schools (Battiste, 1995; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

Soon after the White Paper was announced, Native leaders and spokespersons made it clear that they were no longer willing to endure the educational system that was and had been in place (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996) or to wait for the current school system to change to accommodate the needs of Native children (Elofson & Elofson, 1987).

From all areas, Native reaction to the white paper was profoundly negative. In 1970, a group of Indian chiefs from Alberta, along with other Canadian citizens, responded with the release of their own document, *Citizens Plus* (Indian Chiefs of Alberta, 1970), a paper that has been more commonly referred to as the *Red Paper*. The Red Paper opposed all the proposals of the White paper. The White Paper had generated a great deal of interest amongst Native leaders in the education of their children and a movement had begun towards the concept of Indian control of education. Although the White Paper was never formally passed into legislation, schools still remained external institutions that were being imposed upon Native peoples (Barman et al., 1986, p. 15).

In formal response to the White Paper, the National Indian Brotherhood (1972; now known as the Assembly of First Nations) drafted its landmark policy statement, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (*ICIE*). This position paper reaffirmed the federal government's responsibility for Native education, but at the same time, it rejected the government's intent to surrender administrative responsibility for education to the provinces (Battiste, 1995). This paper asserted that "Indian parents must have FULL RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTROL OF EDUCATION" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 27) and Native people "must reclaim their right to direct the education of [their] children" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 3). It argued that only Native people can develop a suitable philosophy of education based on Native values. The National Indian Brotherhood believed that this policy, based on the two fundamental principles of Native parental responsibility and local control of education, would allow the "Indian people themselves... work out the existing problems and develop an appropriate education program for their children" (p. 31).

In 1973, the federal government accepted the landmark policy paper *Indian Control of Indian Education* (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972) in principle as a national policy (Battiste, 1995; Kirkness, 1992). As a part of this decision, and of particular significance in this case, "the federal government rescinded the proposal to turn over education to the provinces and acknowledged the right of national Aboriginal leaders to assume jurisdictional control and parental responsibility for Indian education" (Battiste, 1995, p. ix).

Since this landmark federal policy statement, there have been some changes, with many of them ongoing and evolving, to the education of Native students both on and off reserve. Since 1972, a notable change has been the increased number of schools that operate under local Aboriginal administration (Battiste, 1995; Dawson, 1988; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), these Aboriginally-controlled schools have hired more Aboriginal teachers, enhanced curriculum to include Aboriginal culture, and introduced Aboriginal language classes. Such changes have also indirectly impacted provincial schools and this can be observed in provincial policy changes and in that some provincial school boards with a high Aboriginal student base have developed or supported the enhancement of existing programs to encourage Native culture and languages, and they have hired more Aboriginal personnel and Aboriginal teachers (Alberta Learning, 2005; Alberta Teachers' Association [ATA], 2004; Barman et al., 1986; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Another significant outcome was the funding of Indian education training programs at various postsecondary institutions across Canada to increase the numbers of Aboriginal teachers. These include the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP), the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP), and the Saskatchewan Urban Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP; Battiste, 1995).

Existing literature continues to support the importance of incorporating Native values and beliefs into school programs and curriculum for the benefit of Native children (INAC, Assembly of First Nations, 1988; MacPherson, 1991; National Indian Brotherhood, 1972; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The issues raised in the 1960's regarding Native education are still relevant today. Essentially, Native people want to "give [their] children the knowledge to understand and be proud of themselves and the knowledge to understand the world around them" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 1).

Even in provincial schools (schools generally funded by the provincial government and where the majority of Canadian children attend elementary and secondary school), the general attitude among Native parents is that their children need to succeed academically while still knowing their identity and history (Alberta Education, 1987).

Education and Culture

Generally, the education system reflects the culture of the society it represents. Society transmits cultural values and beliefs through the material taught in school and the methods used to teach that material. Schools play a role in developing academic and vocational skills; they also develop culture, mores, and social values (Battiste, 2000) Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002b). Essentially, education plays a significant role in cultural transmission in that the education system "shapes the language and pathways of thinking, the contours of character and values, the social skills and creative potential of the individual" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p. 433). However, this has not been the case with the Native people of Canada, who have had to endure an educational system that does not reflect the culture in which they live. The education system to a great extent reflects the mainstream culture of Canada, which is not necessary Native.

By implementing education programs that reflect Aboriginal culture, cultural identity will become strong; consequently, success will occur in school and in all aspects of life (Dawson, 1988). According to Native parents, "If my children are proud, if my children have identity, if my children know who they are and if they are proud to be who they are, they'll be able to encounter anything in life" (Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, 1984; as cited in Dawson, 1988, p. 48). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) stated that although change is occurring, current education policies still do not recognize the needs of Native children.

Parental and Community Involvement

More meaningful parent and community involvement in the school system is a need that the literature on Native education has emphasized (Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Butterfield & Pepper, 1992; Friedel, 1999; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002b; National Indian Brotherhood, 1972; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). *Parental involvement* is defined as "participating in school life in supportive advisory and decision-making roles" (Butterfield & Pepper, 1992, p. 47). Perhaps the objective of more parental involvement has not been met because of the past experiences of many parents of Native children. Parental involvement in school can have many positive outcomes. It can "lead to increased attendance, positive attitudes, higher grades and increased participation in post-secondary education" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002b, p. 20). Aboriginal-parent participation in schools can result in their being a part of educational decision making and thus will add to and change the culture of the school (Friedel, 1999).

Assimilationist strategies used in the past alienated parents from the education system (Butterfield & Pepper, 1992). Another contributor to the negative feelings towards education systems and consequently the lack of parental participation in schools has been the residential school experience of many Native people. Parents who attended residential schools were reluctant to become involved in their children's school functions because of their own negative experiences (Haig-Brown, 1988). Another contributing factor that Friedel (1999) identified is "that Native people resist becoming involved as parents because administrators continue not to ask them for guidance or advice" (p. 7).

Aside from this, it is important that Native parents and Native communities become involved in school life so that the schools that serve their children reflect the Native community's values and beliefs rather than only mainstream values and beliefs. The Assembly of First Nations (1988) contended that "communities need a school which is an extension of the community" (p. 81). Aboriginal parents and community need to have a voice that is strong, and they need to be heard (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The commission encouraged Aboriginal parents and families to become involved to be able to articulate and shape the education that they want for their children.

Elders, community members, and parents are crucial to culture, language, curriculum development, and academic success (Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Hampton, 1995). They need to be an integral part of the education system. In the NWT it is believed that strong partnerships with all groups or persons involved in the education system are essential. Because everyone should be and is part of the process of developing school programs and making them relevant, the programs are important for the whole community (Jewison, 1995). Since the National Indian Brotherhood's (1972) *Indian Control of Indian Education* policy paper was published, parental involvement has increased. However, that participation seems particularly geared towards aiding in cultural events and school activities, such as volunteering for the hot lunch program, field trips, or reading programs. Furthermore, many parents are exclusively contacted only about discipline matters (Friedel, 1999). Although parents' participation may not seem much different from that of parents engaged in the public school system, it is different in that in the past the education system did not recognize the importance of the involvement of Aboriginal parents and did not receive proper attention from federal, provincial, and territorial authorities (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002b)—and, in fact, resisted it (Butterfield & Pepper, 1992; Friedel, 1999).

There are numerous ways to involve parents in the school system. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) pointed out that all schools serving Aboriginal children should adopt policies that welcome the involvement of Aboriginal parents and families in the life of the school. For instance, schools can establish advisory or parent committees and promote involvement of parents in school activities. Involving parents in curriculum decisions would further enhance their involvement in the school (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). These groups could then address issues that may arise concerning the education of Native students (Alberta Education, 1987). Ongoing communication between Aboriginal parents and the school can work together in the development of education initiatives, problem solving, and decision making have a direct impact on their children (Butterfield & Pepper, 1992). Parents need to be encouraged and empowered to participate in educational issues that have long- and short-term goals. Education systems can evolve to promote a strong cultural identity and equally strong academic success with the participation of parents (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002b).

Some researchers have contended that ensuring community and parental involvement in schools creates a connection between the community and the school rather than existing outside of the community (Friedel, 1999). As a result, the school will become more meaningful to the community and the students and not just an external institution with no relevance to the surrounding environment. "It is somewhat like creating a new educational world which includes First Nations as an integral and active participant" (Kirkness, 1992, p. 103).

Preservice and Cross-Cultural Training for Teachers

In the education system teachers are the agents of socialization and of creating optimal learning environments in the environment in which they teach (Gorman, 1999). With this in mind, many researchers have recommended that non-Native educators be prepared to teach in cultures other than their own (Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Kirkness, 1992; National Indian Brotherhood, 1972; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). In other words, teachers need to be prepared when they teach in an Aboriginal community. They need a clear understanding of the value of Native languages, history, and culture. This preparation will help them to be sensitive to the needs and values of Aboriginal students and to include these considerations in their classroom teaching (Gorman, 1999; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Skinner, as cited in Cahape & Howley, 1992; Steinhauer, 1995). Since 1972 it has been emphasized all across the nation that non-Native teachers should receive additional training to prepare them for cross-cultural situations and be instructed on how to make schooling for Native children more meaningful; for example, by making it more relevant and including ways to instill pride and cultural awareness in the students (Kirkness, 1992, p. 17).

To be effective instructors, non-Aboriginal teachers must be trained to implement teaching methods that are effective, and in some cases necessary, with Native students. Some of these include cooperative learning, holistic learning, experiential education, interactive learning, bilingual education, and ESL (Reyhner, 1992, p. 45). Although it has been recommended that this be accomplished through teacher training programs, it can also be accomplished in professional development workshops and courses, and summer institutes offered by local teacher associations, universities and colleges, and local communities. One way to ensure that teachers are more prepared to work with culturally and linguistically diverse populations is to offer cross-cultural courses at the university level (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Skinner, 1992). For non-Native educators, this may involve an extra course on cross-cultural teaching or on Native education at the least to introduce them to the various dimensions of working in a cross-cultural setting.

The development of preservice training and professional development of teachers at the schools in which they work is another method to prepare non-Native teachers. These sessions could be locally developed workshops or Native education–oriented conferences (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996) that might focus on numerous educational topics related specifically to Native education and the needs of Native students. The topics addressed might include teaching strategies that work with Aboriginal students, the cultural norms of the communities, the values and beliefs of the Aboriginal groups/peoples, community expectations, and community resources (such as local personnel, facilities, organizations, and literature) that are available to the teachers (Assembly of First Nations, 1988). Although the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended that the provincial and territories require that all teachers take at least one course on Aboriginal history and culture during their training, teacher education programs across the nation are not requiring students to take any course on First Nations education (Archibald, Pidgeon, Janvier, Commodore, & McCormick, 2002).

Elder Involvement

Elders are considered the gatekeepers of knowledge. Butterfield and Pepper (1992), Jewison (1995), Skinner (1992, 1999), Kirkness (1998), and Battiste (1998) all agreed that involving Elders in the school is crucial, because Native community members believe that Elders are the holders of tradition and knowledge, and therefore they play a central role in Aboriginal education. As Kirkness (1998) wrote:

> Not properly acknowledging the Elders is probably the most serious mistake we [Aboriginal People] make as we attempt to create a quality education for our people. Let's face it; we can't do it without them. How can we learn about our traditions on which to base our education if we don't ask the Elders? (p. 13)

Elders can do a great deal to enrich Native and non-Native education systems, such as conducting ceremonies, counseling students, and reviewing and amending school policies to ensure that the Native way is included in student experiences. Elders may also be consulted to ensure that traditional activities and ceremonies are conducted according to traditions and are part of the school calendar, and they can be involved in curriculum projects and inservice training for school staff (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Elders are the most able to ensure not only the inclusion of traditional knowledge, but also its traditional methods of transmission, such as the oral tradition, in passing on knowledge through stories, one-to-one instruction, and modeling.

In the past, Elders, just as parents, have faced many obstacles to becoming involved in the education process (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The education system did not recognize the knowledge and roles of Elders in the education process. They should be involved in school activities with the students but also, more important, in the culture and language programs developed for the schools (Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Battiste, 1995; Skinner, 1999). Elders are able to make valuable contributions to education with regard to Aboriginal curriculum and language program development (Jewison, 1995; Skinner, 1999). It is important to recognize that "Elders can play an integral role in the learning process for Aboriginal children and youth" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p. 528).

Native Teachers

Perhaps one of the best ways to ensure success in a Native school is by increasing the numbers of Native teachers. Kirkness (1999) believed that Native teachers are the "key to progress in the education of Indians" (p. 57). Many have argued that hiring Native teachers and other school personnel will enrich schools that have a dominant Native population. Having Native teachers present concepts in the school context enriches Native identity, traditions, psychology, culture and language, and history (Kirkness, 1999). "Native teachers and counsellors who have an intimate understanding of Indian traditions, psychology, way of life and language are best able to create the learning environment suited to the habits and interests of the Indian child" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 18). They can also serve as positive role models for Native students (Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Furthermore, Aboriginal teachers have the ability to bring their Aboriginal language and culture to education programs through classroom lessons and classroom management styles (Jewison, 1995).

The presence of Native people as teachers and other school personnel also has the potential to increase parental and community involvement in the school (Kirkness, 1999). Native teachers who are products of similar experiences and environments can relate with greater ease to Native parents and students (Kirkness, 1999). They increase confidence in the institution and provide a link between the community and the school, thus reducing tensions and distrust between the two (Kleinfeld, 1992).

Although there is an overwhelming consensus in education research that Native teachers are crucial to the success of schools with a Native population. The problem today in Native education is that there are too few Native teachers. Aboriginal elementary and secondary teachers represent 1.3% of the total number of Canadians in this occupation (Archibald et al., 2002). All across Canada, in every province and at every level of education, there is a gap between the number of Aboriginal students and Aboriginal teacher representation. To demonstrate the chasm, Archibald et al. reported that 6.4% of Canada's population aged 14 and under was Aboriginal; however, the number of Aboriginal teachers was 1.3%. This low ratio of Aboriginal teachers across Canada emphasizes the need to increase their numbers.

Programs and Curriculum

Many researchers suggested that for Native students to experience success culturally and academically, offering programs and curricula that promote the traditional values and beliefs of the Native community is essential (Alberta Education, 1987; Archibald, 1995; Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Elofson & Elofson, 1987; Gorman, 1999; Reyhner, 1992; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The exclusion of the Native worldview and culture from the curriculum results in Native students feeling shame because such exclusion marginalizes their own Native values (Archibald, 1995; Gorman, 1999). Rather than feeling shame, Native Children need to feel proud about learning and sharing their cultures (Archibald, 1995). The culture of the community should not be disregarded in the curriculum; it must be built on a basis of that culture.

Such curriculum will accomplish many things, such as strengthening student identity, self-esteem, and self-worth; eliminating stereotypes; and teaching pride and knowledge in their Native heritage (Assembly of First Nations, 1988).The provincial ministry has also recommended that provincial schools develop "curriculum with Native content [which] will be of relevance to the individual Native student: it will enhance a feeling of self-worth, identity, motivation, and contribute to their goals and aspirations as unique peoples of this country" (Alberta Education, 1987, p. 13). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) recommended that all schools develop or continue developing innovative curricula that reflect Aboriginal cultures and community realities. In the NWT, where Aboriginal people make up 61% of the population, the Department of Education supports a relevant curriculum that will "promote a sense of confidence and pride in one's heritage" (Jewison, 1995, p. 5). The department has developed curricula for specific northern high school courses.

According to Reyhner (1992), implementing and developing a curriculum that acknowledges Native heritage can eliminate cultural discontinuity. Reyhner explained that cultural discontinuity occurs when there is a discrepancy between what Native parents show and tell their children with regard to cultural teachings and what the school is promoting. In effect "Native children must choose between their Native heritage and school success" (p. 42). Problems associated with a high failure rate, according to Elofson and Elofson (1987), occur because of irrelevant programs. A curriculum that acknowledges Native culture and traditional practices demonstrates to Natives and non-Natives that Native culture is worthy and should be respected (Elofson & Elofson, 1987).

It is also important to note that not only does the curriculum need to reflect Native culture, but also the Elders, parents, and community must be involved in the curriculum's design (Archibald, 1995; Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). It is important to listen to the parents in the community where the school is situated in developing curricula that incorporate Native beliefs, values, and culture into the education system for Native children (Archibald, 1995; Elofson & Elofson, 1987).

Teaching and Learning Styles

Learning and teaching styles that are appropriate to the background and experience of the Native child need to be considered and incorporated into classrooms to meet the needs of Native students. Where these styles and practices reflect the Native worldview, the success of Native students is more likely (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Essentially, teaching must be designed to fit the children (Elofson & Elofson, 1987). Reyhner (1992) recommended using teaching methods that have had demonstrated success, such as cooperative learning, holistic learning, experiential education, interactive learning, bilingual education, and ESL (p. 45).

Also important in students' success is the way that the teacher relates to them. These relationships are visible in how the teacher communicates, interacts, and bonds (Kleinfeld, 1992; Steinhauer, 1995). Kleinfeld suggested that teachers will have more success with Native students if they teach in a warm but demanding manner, and Steinhauer reminded teachers that attitude, the use of humor, and respect are especially important in teaching in a Native environment. Humor is extremely important because it shows students that the teacher is trying to make them comfortable. Teasing is usually seen as humorous, but it depends on the type of relationship that has been established.

Native Languages

There is an intimate relationship between Native culture and language. Fluent speakers and Elders believe that without their languages, their cultures will be lost (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Language and culture go hand in hand because "it is impossible to translate the deeper meanings of words and concepts into the languages of other cultures. Linguists agree that language shapes the way people perceive the world as well as how they describe it" (p. 463).

For these reasons, many people have argued that Aboriginal language instruction at all levels of education is essential and must be assigned priority because the language is such a large factor of the culture (Battiste, 1998; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Skinner, 1992). Linguistic competence is fundamental in the promotion of Aboriginal knowledge and humanity (Battiste, 1998). Not only is language a means to communicate, but it also transmits the culture through the language (Battiste, 1998).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) stated that Native languages ought to be promoted through either first- or second-language instruction or immersion programs. Further, there should be an emphasis on developing language instructional materials.

Conclusion

Educational change and improvements are ongoing. In the past 30 years, there have been many improvements in Native education in an attempt to restore continuity between the Aboriginal community and the school. This has been or is being attempted by developing programs in the education system that promote many of the recommendations discussed in this literature review. These recommendations include the promotion and teaching of Aboriginal languages in the schools; the hiring of Native and/or appropriately trained personnel; the promotion and involvement of Elders, parents, and Native community members in all aspects of the school program; and, finally, the development of relevant curriculum. The objective is to ensure that education programs and curricula will reflect the culture in which Native students live rather than an education system that imposes an alien set of values and beliefs.

CHAPTER III:

METHODOLOGY

In choosing a research methodology, I explored various approaches that would best suit my research question and honor the Indigenous people from whom the data came as well as the person who I am. I struggled to select a specific research framework that would meet these criteria. To address my research question, I drew on the principles of grounded theory and Indigenous research methodology. I do not claim that this study strictly follows the principles of either; however, I can safely say that they are evident in the way in which I planned, conducted, and framed my research. In this next section I will discuss the characteristics of grounded theory and Indigenous research methodology as they apply to my research.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory, as Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) defined it, is "an approach to theory development that involves deriving constructs and laws directly from the immediate data that the researcher has collected rather than drawing on an existing theory" (p. 760). There is a heavy reliance on the inductive approach; thus the categories are grounded or emerge primarily from the data that are collected. The use of an inductive approach "begins with the researcher 'immersing' themselves in the document (that is, the various messages) in order to identify the dimensions or themes that seem meaningful to the producers of each message" (Berg, 2001, p. 245). The emerging categories help to explain the phenomena as well as to describe them. Although there is a greater reliance on inductive category formation, grounded theory acknowledges that personal experience, scholarly experience (having read about it), or previous research that examined the matter will inevitably be used to analyze, interpret, and propose meaning to the data (Berg, 2001, pp. 246-247; MacDonald, 1998, p. 52). "However, in order to reach a point where a theoretical premise can be suggested, the constructs must be validated by the data and organized as emergent themes" (p. 52). Thus, I used grounded theory as an overall guide to identify the themes that emerged directly from the data that I collected rather than relying on existing theories.

Indigenous Research Methodology

In planning and conducting my research, I found that Indigenous scholars discussed the principles of Indigenous research methodology in papers, articles, and some of my graduate classes. These principles reflect what I have hoped to accomplish as an Aboriginal person conducting research with Aboriginal people. Wilson (2001) recommended a change from "Indigenous perspective in research to researching from an Indigenous paradigm" (p. 175). He explained that "Indigenous research needs to reflect Indigenous contexts and worldviews: that is, they must come from an Indigenous paradigm rather than an Indigenous perspective" (p. 176). According to Wilson, a research paradigm is formed by one's "set of beliefs about the world and about gaining knowledge that go together to guide your actions as to how you're going to go about doing your research" (p. 175). In effect, one's beliefs and worldview will work together and guide how one conducts research.

Just like other Indigenous researchers, I strove to conduct research that honors the worldviews of Indigenous peoples. At the same time, I am not suggesting that my research reflects an Indigenous worldview because I have much to learn about Cree wisdom and knowledge. However, some of the principles that many Indigenous scholars uphold are principles that I have tried to embrace and allow to guide my research process.

Cora Weber-Pillwax (2003) identified six main principles that she regarded as foundational to Indigenous research:

> 1. All forms of living things are to be respected as being related and interconnected. . . . Respect means living that relationship in all forms of interactions. . . .
> 2. The researcher ensures that there are no negative or selfish motives for doing the research, because that could bring suffering upon everyone in the community. . . .
> 3. The foundation of Indigenous research lies within the reality of the lived Indigenous experience. Indigenous researchers ground their research knowingly in the lives of real persons as individual and social beings, not on the world of ideas.
> 4. Any theories developed or proposed are based upon and supported by Indigenous forms of epistemology. . . .
> 5. Indigenous research cannot undermine the integrity of Indigenous persons or communities because it is grounded in that integrity. . . .
> 6. The languages and cultures of Indigenous peoples are living processes. . . . Indigenous scholarship reflects inherited Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies and it is the responsibility of Indigenous researchers associated with a university to maintain and continuously renew the connections with our ancestors and our communities through embodiment, adherence, and practice of these. (pp. 42-43)

Wilson (2001) explained that Indigenous methodology has to do with relational accountability:

> To me an Indigenous methodology means talking about relational accountability. As a researcher you are answering to all your relations when you are doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgments of better or worse. Instead you should

> be fulfilling your relationships with the world around you. So your methodology has to ask different questions: rather than asking about validity or reliability you are asking how am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations in this relationship? The axiology or morals need to be an integral part of the methodology so that when I am gaining knowledge, I am not just gaining in some abstract pursuit; I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfill my end of the research relationship. This becomes my methodology, an Indigenous methodology, by looking at relational accountability or being accountable to all my relations. (p. 177)

Martin (2002; as cited in Steinhauer, 2002) identified the main features of an Indigenous research methodology as follows:

> 1. Recognition of our world views, our knowledge and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival. This serves as a research framework;
> 2. Honoring Aboriginal social mores as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves a Aboriginal people in our own lands and when in the lands of other Aboriginal people;
> 3. Emphasizing the social, historical and political contexts which shape our experiences, our lives, positions and futures;
> 4. Privileging the voices, experiences, and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands;
> 5. Identifying and redressing issues of importance for us. (p. 72)

Although the notion of Indigenous research methodology is relatively new and complex, other Indigenous researchers have introduced very specific principles and features that researchers such as I can follow. Upon reviewing these very principles, it became clear to me that Indigenous scholars must adhere to Indigenous research methodology. If we as Indigenous scholars seek answers by using this method, then we will have enriched our studies, ourselves, and our communities. This review of the principles of Indigenous research methodology made me aware of my responsibilities as an Aboriginal person conducting research in an Aboriginal community.

Throughout my study I consciously considered and purposefully incorporated many Indigenous research principles. Above all, when I first designed the study I kept in mind my ancestors, my family, and my roots. I did not want to do research for the sake of doing research; rather, to honor my ancestral roots, I needed to conduct research that would be respectful of Aboriginal people. Any research that I conduct must have a positive outcome for the community. With this in mind, I ensured that the design, applications, and outcomes of the study would serve only the best interests of the community and everyone involved. I feel that it is my responsibility to be involved in work that has a purpose and can lead to positive change and action. I needed to follow cultural protocols and the values of the community. My research methods were also a consideration, and they needed to be compatible with my participants, the Aboriginal community, and my own Aboriginal background. During the interviews building a relationship and trust was crucial. I was able to form safe, trusting relationships in which I could share my family network with the participants and they could share theirs with me.

Method

Design of the Study

I drew on aspects of grounded theory and Indigenous research methodologies to guide my research in general. The specific process involved using semistructured interviews with various community members to allow them to voice their perspectives on how Aboriginal languages, cultures, and histories can be portrayed in the design of First Nation school programs.

The themes that emerged from the interview data helped explain the phenomena. I approached the research as an Aboriginal researcher from the community rather than as a researcher disconnected from the community and the interviewees. As an Aboriginal researcher, I strove to follow the community's cultural protocols, values, and beliefs that I was also studying. I made it important to follow the three Rs of research: respect, reciprocity, and relationality (Steinhauer, 2002, p. 73).

The Participants

My study involved four community groups within one Aboriginal community: Aboriginal Elders, parents, students, and band administrators. I chose two participants from each community group, for a total of eight participants for the whole study. The participants are members of a specific First Nations community in Northern Alberta, for which I will use the pseudonym Wapoose Lake.

The main criterion that I applied in choosing the participants was that they all had to have had some recent experience or background with the band-operated community school. The parent participants needed to have at least one child who was attending the band school. The Elder participants could have been involved with the school committees or with school functions, or they could have volunteered or worked at the school. The student participants, K-20 years of age, needed to be attending or have attended the band school. I felt that they would be mature enough to articulate their beliefs and young enough to be able to recall their schooling experiences. The band administrator participants needed to be involved in a committee or board that deals directly with the band-operated school. Because I have direct and ongoing personal connections with the community and with the band-operated school, I was able to choose participants who met the study's criteria.

Data Collection

Because the research study would involve collecting data from band members, it was proper Aboriginal protocol and also an ethical research practice to receive consent from the Chief and Council. In this case I sought and received support through a Band Council Resolution, which meant that, before I began my research, I contacted a band councilor who agreed to submit a letter on my behalf to the Chief and Council. In this letter I outlined the purpose of the research and asked the Chief and Council members for approval to conduct research with band members of the Wapoose Lake. After a few days I received approval from the Chief and Council in a letter, and I began to make plans to contact potential participants.

I made first contact in a telephone call in which I introduced myself and gave a brief explanation of why I was calling. I then asked each participant whether I could make an appointment to visit him/her at home or meet to discuss my study further. During my home visits, I discussed the purpose and nature of my research and provided a formal information letter that described the purpose, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. Following Aboriginal protocol, I offered my Elder prospective participants tobacco when I asked for their participation in my study; and I ensured that the parents/guardians of the participants who were under 18 years of age were also present and agreed to their children's involvement in the study. For those persons who believed that their command of English was not sufficient to communicate, I offered to have an English/Cree translator present during the initial meeting and for the interviews to ensure that the prospective participants clearly understood all of the information about the study and that those who were not comfortable communicating solely in English would have an option. However, all participants declined my offer; they were confident that they would be able to communicate in English.

Even though my participants—for most of whom Cree is their first language or there is a strong Cree language influence in the home—declined to have an interpreter present for the interview, I did not foresee any difficulties in because I felt that my participants and I would share the same understandings and meanings of words and ideas. I have been a member of the community for many years, and I have my own Aboriginal background and history on which to rely. During the interview I also asked probing questions to ensure that there were no misinterpretations. For instance, in deciding on what aspects of the interview needed to be clarified, I believed that it was important to make certain that when the participants and I were talking about the term 'culture,' I understood their intended meaning. One of my questions in the interview was what their understanding of the term *culture* is. Because I have lived in this community, I am aware of the community's varied definitions as well as academic definitions. For some community members culture refers only to Native spirituality, whereas for others it means all aspects of culture such as food, language, ceremonies, traditions, norms, values, dress, and history, but does not include Native spirituality. For still others it means all aspects of culture including Native spirituality. By understanding that there could be various interpretations of *culture*, I was able to anticipate that I would need to ask more precise probing questions about what aspects of Cree culture should be learned in the classroom.

The data collection for this study involved conducting two interviews in a semistructured format with each participant, with each session lasting approximately an hour and a half, over a three-month period. This allowed for ample time between the two interviews for me to transcribe and review the data so that any issues or questions that I had could be clarified. I began by introducing myself and providing information about my family background and my motivation for this research. This process was important because it demonstrated respect and helped to develop a relationship and trust with the participants. Because I already have ties with the community members, establishing rapport was relatively easy. The Elders especially enjoyed this introduction because they were able to ask questions about my family. This process of building trust also aided in eliciting honest answers from the participants.

After the greetings and introductions, I proceeded with a "key" open-ended question and some probing questions when needed. This approach enabled the participants to freely discuss the topic without set limitations and to include information that they deemed important and relevant that I had not anticipated. Although I did not have a set series of questions that I intended to ask, I did have a guide that I took into each interview. The participants answered many of the questions during the course of the interview without ever being asked. I used the following questions as guides:

1. What Cree language, culture, and history would be acceptable in the band school, if any at all?
2. Define *culture* in your own terms.
3. If you can, define *spirituality*.
4. Should there be a Cree language course in the school?
5. What types of Cree cultural topics do you think our Aboriginal students should learn in school?
6. What types of Cree/Aboriginal history do you think is important to learn, if any at all?
7. Are there any Cree language, culture, and history topics that you think should definitely be taught in school?
8. What final advice or thoughts would you like to give to those people who are involved in program planning for any band-operated school regarding Cree language, culture, and history?

Because I feared that some of the participants might not feel comfortable in signing a consent form as a result of their past negative experiences with education institutions such as mission schools or any other type of federal school, I also offered them the choice of giving oral consent before we began the first interview began. However, all agreed to give written consent. I then discussed my research study and their rights as participants. I read through and explained the various points on the consent form with each of the participants and ensured that they were aware of their right to participate and to withdraw at any time without penalty and that I would maintain confidentiality at all times. At the beginning of the second interview, I again reviewed their rights with them. Finally, I gave the participants a copy of the consent form for their own perusal.

I audiotaped each interview and hired someone to transcribe it verbatim. To ensure confidentiality, I asked the transcriptionist to sign a confidentiality form before beginning. Listening to the tapes again and doing a member check with the participants with sections of the tapes that were unclear helped to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the transcribed responses. I used pseudonyms to ensure the anonymity of each participant. Although many of them did not mind if I chose not to conceal their identity, I maintained the anonymity of all participants to preserve the consistency of the study. In writing my report of this study, I have made every effort to conceal the identities of people and the location of this study.

Data Analysis

After each interview I recorded any strong ideas and opinions the participants expressed, as well as any questions, initial impressions, or thoughts that I had immediately following the interview. I used these notes to guide the next interview. Once the data-collection process was complete and the interviews were transcribed, I read and reread the data in an attempt to identify similar concepts in each interview and among all of the interviews.

I allowed the categories and themes to emerge deductively and inductively, with a greater emphasis on an inductive approach. I used Berg's (2001) procedure of *open coding* to elicit themes and patterns related to the research question. I wanted to "open inquiry widely" (p. 251) by not limiting the potential themes that might arise. Following Berg's advice, I "carefully and minutely read the interviews line by line and word by word to determine the concepts and categories that fit the data" (p. 255). Themes and concepts emerged as I immersed myself in the interview data and read and reread the interviews rather than sorting the data according to predetermined categories or themes.

During the open-coding process I considered the four guidelines that Strauss (1987) suggested:

1. I kept in mind the original objective of the research study while examining data and at the same remained open to multiple or unanticipated results that might emerge from the data.

2. I analyzed the data minutely and exhaustively to identify the themes and categories that seemed meaningful to the participants and read and reread the data.

3. I took time to reflect and write notes and ideas while coding.

4. I did not assume the relevance of traditional variables (e.g., gender, age, education) unless the data indicated that they were relevant.

A review of the literature and my personal knowledge of the subject from living and working in the area for eight years influenced my theme formation. The themes and subthemes that emerged from the interview data served to describe and explain the outcomes of the research and what Aboriginal community members want from their schools and why.

Once I had identified an array of themes, I coded them so that I could begin to extract statements that coincided with the identified themes. I listed each theme on lined, poster-size chart paper that I taped to a wall. I assigned each participant a color and pseudonym and photocopied the interview data in that color. Then I read through each interview and cut out statements from the interview and pasted the statements under the appropriate theme. By doing this I was able to visually see the themes and which participants' statements fit under which theme all at once.

Trustworthiness

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the design of this study, I used several strategies, including a member check to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts, especially when it was difficult to understand the audiotape. The member check also consisted of sharing my interpretations of the interview with each participant. To strengthen the credibility of my findings, I asked a colleague/ friend from the community who had access to all of my data and provided feedback on a regular basis to review my research study. In addition, I also consulted with my advisor regularly.

I maintained anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study. To minimize the number of individuals who might realize the identity of the participants, I gave each participant a pseudonym and did not reveal their identity to the transcriptionist, colleagues, or anyone else mentioned in the study. To further protect their identity, I obscured the characteristics of the participants' lives relating to age and number of children; however, I did not change aspects of their personalities or significant life experiences. These modifications enable the reader to gain a sense of who the participants are without being able to identify them as individuals.

Teacher as researcher was another concern. Because I have taught in the community and have been a member of the community where I conducted my research, I felt that it might be of some concern to my participants and thus compromise my study. Because people in the community know that I am a teacher, I was concerned that they might answer my interview questions in a way that they assumed I wanted them to respond; and because I am a community member, they might have situated me in one community circle rather than another. I dealt with this issue, first, by explaining to each participant the reason that I was conducting this research study. Second, I reiterated to each participant whom I interviewed that I was engaging in this activity as a researcher and not as a teacher or a community member. Further, to eliminate any special problems that might have occurred as a result of my being a teacher in the community, I selected participants with whom I do not have direct or daily contact: students who attended a band-operated school in which I did not teach and parents whose children I did not teach. I also made a point of choosing participants who were not close acquaintances or relatives.

Setting: Wapoose Lake

Many people who do not have much, if any, experience with Aboriginals and Aboriginal communities tend to assume that Aboriginal communities are all the same. However, each community is unique. They differ all across the country according to language, proximity to urban centers, economic development, education, and specific historical circumstances. Therefore it is important to this study that I provide a description of the community setting as one consideration of the context for the research.

To maintain the anonymity of the community in which I did my research, I have used the pseudonym of Wapoose Lake. Wapoose Lake is a Cree community located in Alberta with a population of between 5,000 and 10,000; approximately half live on Wapoose Lake reserve. About 30% of the land is usable for private residences and some farming, and the remainder is covered by muskeg, sloughs, and lakes. The residents use nearby lakes for various outdoor activities such as fishing, boating, and swimming.

Wapoose Lake is a community that neighbors other communities. Within the larger community are First Nation reserves, a hamlet, private land, and Crown land, all in the vicinity of Wapoose Lake. All of the residents of the communities of the Wapoose Lake area are provided with necessary services and amenities such as medical and dental services, a pharmacy, a hospital, an ice arena, a community hall, daycares, a college, grocery stores, gas stations, liquor stores, fast-food restaurants, a lounge, various band department offices, restaurants, churches, schools, and an RCMP detachment. Residents travel to a nearby town or city to obtain services and other amenities that Wapoose Lake and its surrounding communities do not provide.

The principal languages spoken in the community are English and Cree. Wapoose Lake has public as well as band-operated schools, and community members have the option of sending their children to elementary, middle, and high schools operating in the area.

The Indian reserve community of Wapoose Lake is governed by a Chief and six Council members who are elected for four-year terms. Chief and Council are responsible for managing all public matters that concern their band members. They oversee various areas such as band-operated education, health, public works, housing, land claims, social services, and economic development.

Unfortunately, unemployment is high, and many community members rely on social assistance. Seasonal labor provides jobs in firefighting, construction, and tree planting. Housing is a constant concern for members of Wapoose Lake, and it is common for multiple families to live in one dwelling.

The residents of Wapoose Lake have a variety of community functions throughout the year to meet their various needs. There are weddings, funerals, wakes, family dances, old-timer dances, feasts, church tent meetings, and karaoke nights. Although the residents of the Wapoose Lake communities have their social and basic needs met, many unresolved issues inhibit or prevent the community from making significant progress in the area of education for their children.

CHAPTER IV:

DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Community Perspectives on School Programs in Relation to Cree Language, Culture, and History

Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting and analyzing the data that emerged from asking Wapoose Lake community members for their perspectives on how Aboriginal languages, cultures, and histories can be portrayed in the design of First Nation school programs. Through the perspectives of eight selected Wapoose First Nation members, I was able to gain valuable insight into the complex issues of Cree language, culture, and history in the local band-operated school. In an analysis of the data, the significant themes that emerged were (a) the place of school in the community, (b) the role of parents and the community, (c) identity, and (d) community tensions.

When I began my research, I observed a lack of agreement among community members in relation to the inclusion of Cree language, culture, and history in the programs and/or curriculum of the band-operated school. I wanted to know what some community members expected from school programs with regard to the inclusion or place of Cree language, culture, and history. Initially in the analysis, I looked for ways that participant-supported topics and aspects of Cree culture could be included in the school program. However, as I examined the data more carefully, deeper layers of meaning and areas of thought came into focus. I realized that there is so much more to answering the question of inclusion of language, culture, and history than just how much Cree culture should be integrated into the school program. From the community's perspective, it seemed that the participants were raising other related questions: (a) What is appropriate for the band school to be teaching? (b) what is the place of the school in the community? and (c) where should Cree culture be taught?

Labels

In organizing my interpretations and themes, I found myself labeling the participants based on a set of criteria. In this case I grouped them based on their spiritual or religious beliefs. Although many participants referred to themselves as "them" in this discussion, implying that they are in a different group or in a self-identified group, I was uneasy using this "community" system of labeling people because I could see no positive purpose for the labeling.

Labeling people can have adverse consequences. Labels can originate from various sources such as government documents, literature, research, community, and teachers. These labels, both negative and positive, can follow a person or group of people for their entire lives. For example, should it matter whether a person who self-identifies as an Aboriginal is a Treaty Indian, a Bill C-31 Native, or a non-Treaty Native? These are government-created labels. From my personal experience, people are surprised when I identify myself as Aboriginal. There have been many times when people have asked me if I am Métis, a Bill C-31 Native, or a Treaty or non-Treaty Native, as if being one type of Aboriginal is better than being another type of Aboriginal.

Labels can limit individuals from growing beyond the constraints of the label. For instance, people may want to fit the mould of the label so much that they will not allow themselves to have opinions beyond the constraints of the label. Labeling identifies people in a one-dimensional manner. There is much more to a person than the label that has been given or the label and/or jargon that has been adopted from various research reports, government documents, and/or other literature. A person who is unaware of the impact of such labeling may use a label to self-identify or self-categorize and thereby limits his/her own growth.

Labels can also have another adverse effect in that they can sometimes lead to people's working against each other rather than working together. If groups perceive themselves as being different from any other group, they may overlook the similarities that groups may have. Groups focus on the differences rather than the similarities. I observed two main groups in this community who are critical of each other, and I wondered whether they are rivals because they really have different stands on various topics or because they believe that if a person is not in their group, the group must be against that person. Rather than everyone working together, they fight each other based on how the label identifies them rather than how they identify themselves. This may potentially represent a false dichotomy. In this work I wanted to prevent this by avoiding the use of religious labels to identify a person in my analysis of the data.

Along with this knowledge was the importance of ensuring that my analysis speaks to what each participant was articulating while at the same time protecting the identity of my participants. Just as Steinhauer (1999) did, I struggled with an appropriate way to present my data. As a member of a community with its own set of values, beliefs, and norms, I wanted to ensure that I provided an accurate picture of the participants. To fully grasp what the participants said, it was important that I contextualize the data. Because the participants agreed to become involved in this study and they were sincere and open in expressing their ideas and thoughts, I wanted to ensure that I protected their anonymity to the best of my ability, as I had promised, while still providing a framework for the data to emerge. Therefore I have provided information on the participants, the setting, and the themes in a manner that does not compromise anonymity yet is able to contextualize the findings from which they came.

The Participants

The eight participants of this study were all members of Wapoose Lake. To preserve their identity, I have used pseudonyms and altered some information about them. Each participant's description is based on community knowledge, interviews, and personal observations. These portrayals enable the reader to contextualize as well as ascribe a human quality to the information given. What follows are brief narratives on each participant.

Grace

Grace is a polite, gentle, 17-year-old student, the oldest of five siblings. She lives on reserve with both of her parents and all of her siblings. She is a bright student who has won awards for her academic performance and excellent attendance at school. She attended the band-operated school from Grades 1 to 9 and then was required to transfer to a nearby public school to continue her schooling because Wapoose Lake does not offer Grades 10 to 12. She is determined to make education her priority and plans to attend university or college after Grade 12. Because Grace's parents see the value in education, they have encouraged her to do her best. Her parents make a point of being involved in the goings-on at the school by attending school functions and public meetings held in Wapoose Lake and volunteering on committees. Those teachers who have taught her described Grace as a pleasure to teach and expect her to do well in whatever profession she chooses.

Lynn

Lynn is a bright, polite, 20-year-old who lives with her parents and her younger brother in Wapoose Lake. She has attended a number of public schools as well as the local band-operated school. She has struggled through some personal difficulties in the last few years which have had an effect on her formal education. Lynn is currently trying to sort out these aspects of her life, and she is determined to continue with her education. She plans to attend an outreach education program in a neighboring town to complete Grade 12 this school year and then to enroll in a college diploma program the following year.

John

John is a warm, friendly, gentle man in his late 50s. He is a father and a grandfather who raised his daughter as a single parent. He is regarded by many in the community as an Elder. He is always open to share his ideas, thoughts, and life story. It is evident that he has a zest for life and a warm heart. His early years were spent in the Wapoose area, where he attended the local mission school until Grade 9 and then found various types of labor jobs. He has traveled and lived all over Canada, but he regards Wapoose Lake as his home. Currently, John is attending university. He is involved in local band politics, specifically with education.

Melvin

Melvin is a humble, friendly Elder in his early 60s who is patient and is well grounded in his identity. He is also a husband, a father of four, and a grandfather. He encourages all people to work and live together in harmony, and he follows traditional Cree ways of living as well as traditional Native values and beliefs. He was born, raised, and lives in the Wapoose Lake area. He attended the local mission school until Grade 9. Melvin is knowledgeable on Wapoose Lake history, the treaty of the area, and natural medicines. He fishes, hunts, and traps regularly. For many years he has been involved in many Cree cultural activities at the school. For over 25 years John has been heavily involved in Wapoose Lake politics as well as regional and national Native politics. He has been a member of the Wapoose Lake Band Council.

William

William comes across as patient, open to discussing ideas, and fair. He was born and raised in the Wapoose Lake area and is married and a father of four daughters. He currently lives on reserve with his family. William has experimented with various types of beliefs and faiths; however, he has chosen to follow the Roman Catholic faith. He attended the local mission school until

Grade 9 and then began working at various labor jobs. He has worked in northern Alberta and northern British Columbia as a farmer's helper as well as in the oil and gas fields. William still hunts, traps, and raises horses. He is currently struggling to find a stable job because of his lack of training or education. He is a strong supporter of public education and encourages his family to continue with their education. William is an active member of the community who attends membership meetings and school functions and recently became a member of the local band-operated school board.

Lynette

Lynette is a wife, mother, and grandmother who is raising her granddaughter while her own daughter attends school. Lynette is sure of herself and her beliefs and well grounded in her Cree, language, culture, and history. She was raised in a traditional Cree environment by her grandmother. Lynette has completed an undergraduate degree and is now pursuing a master's degree. Although she has experimented with other beliefs and faiths, she feels most comfortable with the beliefs and traditions of the Cree. She is a strong advocate of preserving Native traditions and culture.

Sam

Sam is a husband, father of three sons, and foster parent. He was born and raised in the Wapoose area by his parents, and he lives on reserve with his family and currently works in the oil industry. Sam is a warm, straightforward person who is willing to share his views on education and the community. He is community minded and involved in community politics for the benefit of all

Wapoose band members and not for his own personal gain, and many members of his immediate and extended family have been heavily involved in Wapoose politics as well. He was a Council member for two terms and continues to be involved with Wapoose Lake issues. Sam is currently focusing on educational issues that the Wapoose Lake is facing. He believes that a strong public education system is the key to success for our youth.

Sandra

Sandra is a wife, mother, and grandmother who lives on reserve with her family. She was raised by her parents in Wapoose Lake on the same land on which she lives now and attended the local mission school for one year. Heavily involved in Wapoose Lake politics, Sandra has been a band Council member for three terms. She is very energetic and passionate about the work that she is doing for the community, is very approachable to Wapoose Lake members, and participates in many community activities. Although she is very proud of her heritage and language, she is also open-minded about other beliefs, cultures, and ways of living.

Themes

Now that I have provided a context for the participants' views, it will be easier to understand their contributions and the origins of their views. Four major themes and subthemes emerged from my discussions with eight community members on their perspectives of Cree language, culture, and history in school programs. I conducted a thematic analysis to identify and describe these themes and subthemes, which I will discuss in this chapter. All of the themes that emerged are interconnected and woven together to provide insight into the research question.

The main, overarching theme that resonated through the community members' discussions is identity formation. The subthemes that emerged from this theme are the importance of identity and the positive and negative experiences that the participants had had in relation to identity. The second theme is the place of school in the community. In elaborating on this theme, the participants discussed the role of the school through their own eyes. The third theme deals with the role of family and community in the school, and the subthemes are parent and community teachings and parent and community initiatives. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the community tensions surrounding this issue of Cree language, culture, and history in the school program.

Identity

A major theme that emerged in the discussion with the participants was identity. They unanimously agreed that the purpose for encouraging Cree culture in the community and in the school is to ensure that Aboriginals have a strong, positive, healthy Aboriginal identity, and they saw the benefits as increased self-worth, self-esteem, confidence, and stability in life. The participants also discussed the possible negative implications of not having a positive identity, such as feelings of inferiority and dysfunction in life. They believed that students' positive or negative identity would have implications on their journey through life, and they maintained that a positive identity enables a person to have a better chance of dealing with the challenges of life.

Melvin saw a definite benefit to knowing one's roots. He put it well:

> The little people must know where they came from in order to know where they're going, where they're going or what's ahead of them. Knowing who you are, where you come from gives you that strength to head for your goals, because when you don't know, when a person is lost in the bush, you don't know where you are, and you're kind of disoriented. And this is the same thing we were talking about.

Sandra perceived that a positive identity fosters internal strength and pride, which would ultimately increase the self-esteem of Aboriginal youth and lead to the confidence to tackle any difficulty or problem: "If you're teaching the children all these little things that leads to identity, you're bringing them strength; you're bringing them a lot of growth, and they can stand up and feel proud."

I found Sam's remarks in concurrence with Sandra's and Melvin's. Sam remarked that it is important for students to be proud of their culture to avoid embarrassment about who they are, their heritage, or their Cree culture:

> It's important to know who you are, where you came from, what your background is. If I didn't know me, personally, if I didn't know what my background was as a Cree Indian, I don't know; I don't know what I would call myself: a *moniyaw* [White person] or what, right? Or a Métis. You don't know. It's important that a person knows who they are.

According to Elder John, a strong positive identity is very important because it ensures that students will not be confused about who they are and where they come from and thus will be able to move ahead in life:

> If a person's confused, then it's quite difficult for that person to learn anything. If they're confused of who they are, where they fit in, where they want to fit in, it's very difficult for that person to learn, because frustration

> would set in, and once a person's frustrated, you don't want to learn or get taught. I think that has to be remembered.

Internal strength and fortitude will enable Aboriginal children—and later, Aboriginal adults—to meet challenges or new situations without difficulty, such as racism, moving from a reserve to a city, or going to college or university. Sandra asserted that they will make them healthier and wealthier in the broadest sense:

> If you go to the outside world, you will face a lot of discrimination; you will face a *lot* of stuff. And that's where I think if you've got that identity very strong and knowing who you are, it doesn't matter out there; it doesn't matter if you get treated like this, because you're going to stand up for yourself, and you respect yourself for that. I think it's strength.

Lynette talked about times in her life when she had felt lost or misplaced. However, her upbringing, which was rooted in Cree culture, enabled her to have a solid foundation in knowing who she is and thus being able to cope with the trials of life:

> It gave me a solid foundation that I've fallen back on a couple times. . . . That ten-year period I talked about, I was lost; I'll admit that much. And I find when you have that sense of loss or missing something, it affects your whole life—not just your spirituality, but everything.

Elder John explained that students need to "take pride in themselves; take pride in who they are, and to believe in themselves. Then they can live anywhere; they'll fit into any society." According to Sandra, "Just as long as we hold onto our language and know who we are, we can make it out there, and I think we face any challenge out there and risk any challenge."

The students whom I interviewed spoke of identity in very vague terms. They were interested in understanding their roots; however, they were unable to clearly articulate how Cree language, culture, and history could play a positive role in their schooling. One student felt that knowing the history of the Cree people would give her a better sense of her Cree heritage. The other student said that it is important to learn about Cree culture because that is just who she is.

Based on their observations and experiences, many participants also spoke of the negative implications of possessing an inferior self-worth. They remembered times when family, friends, or they themselves had the misfortune to experience negative treatment and hurtful comments that made them feel inferior and unworthy in society. This type of negative treatment could ultimately lead to dire consequences such as lack of self-respect, shame, destructive behavior, and suicide.

John reflected on his own experiences in the convent and the impact that it had on him. Like many people of his generation, he was forced to attend a mission school. He recalled that his experiences were not positive and that he was made to feel inferior and unworthy:

> I can only relate to my experience. When I came out from the residential school, I actually thought I was a nobody, because that's the way I was taught to think. I was called down by the nuns there. They used to call us savages, a bunch of savages from the bush. "You will never amount to nothing. Some of you'll be drunks like your parents." So I grew up like that from six years old to sixteen, fifteen, and so it kind of made me believe— . . . So when I came out, well, I didn't think much or highly of myself. So what do I do? I took to drinking. At least when I drank I felt like somebody. I didn't worry, have no worries then. I can pick up; I can take care of myself. I could face anyone when I was under the influence. And I'm only one amongst many here. I still see that today. . . .
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> When I came out from the convent, I was even ashamed to be Native. I was! So I went and worked on the farm; ten years I worked there so I didn't have to be around my own people. Not that I was any better, because when I went out on a drunk, I went out on a drunk. Sometimes I'd

> be away and stay on the farm there for a couple months maybe in the summertime. I didn't go out that much. But when I went out, I went out!

Melvin also referred to his early experiences of being called down and discriminated against and having no self-worth and the negative impact. He suggested that if people are not grounded in who they are, this creates imbalance and dysfunction in their lives:

> It's hard when you're brought up by another culture, and you try and adjust or make adjustments in your life at a later time. Not bad, I guess, when you're young; but at a later time, in the forties, forty and older, you went through a negative—most of my life I went through a negative, very negative part of my life. And you try and adjust to that. Some people can't cope with it, people my age. A lot of them have gone because a lot of them couldn't cope. They died drinking, some close friends of mine; they just didn't care for themselves. It's hard when you go through that. It's hard also to make adjustments when you're older in life, but it's not impossible. When you reach out for the Higher Power, you can become strong.

The participants also commented that it is obvious that many youth in the community do not seem to have pride in who they are or in their heritage. Melvin acknowledged that youth feel that it is not "cool" to be Native and thus try to reflect some other image that they think is "cooler." Both Melvin and Lynette saw youth trying to portray the image of another cultural group in the way that they dress and in their language, mannerisms, and music. They believed that there is a great need to instill pride in today's youth. Melvin explained:

> The music of the young people is so powerful—the rap music and all of it, if you can call it music. A lot of young people think they are something else rather than what and who they are. They tend to believe that. It's not cool for a lot of youngsters to be Native. But we must keep hammering away at the fact that we are a proud people and that we must instill the pride, the Cree pride in particular, to our people. In the past we've been discriminated, I guess, and shot down and everything, and we get to believe that. People start believing that they are nothing. I was like that

> also. I was called down so much in my life, in my younger days, that I started to believe that I was not much. So we have to gain that back, the pride that we had, our people had a long time ago. They made their own living, proud of how they supported their family, because a Native person long ago—now, today it's different—long ago a Native person, I'll say a man, was so very proud of how he supported his family, the well-being of the family, the health, everything. And now we are sort of other people, other nationalities, where we put money in the forefront, and we've forgotten the way we've done things before, the way our people done things before, where they believed the right thing to do was to support for the well-being of their families. Nowadays a lot of people don't do that today, and that's what we live for, is for health, the well-being of us.

Lynette also saw a problem:

> And the children now, when I look at our youth, our young people, our teenagers, even the ones at the school, the way they dress, the way they talk, the way they act, you don't see one bit of an Indian in them; you see some Afro-Americans, some other cultures that they kind of just took. It makes you wonder.

The participants believed that children and youth need to have a positive identity to be able to accept who they are where they come from and not to be ashamed to function better in life. Melvin argued that they need to

> have an understanding [of] who they are and accept who they are, because you cannot be anybody else. Doesn't matter how hard you try, you'll never be somebody else. So you were given what you were given, and strengthen what you have, strengthen who you are. . . . The Creator—we always say the Creator gave us life, the language and the culture that goes with it, and we must strengthen us as a people.

The participants generally agreed that a positive identity has a positive ripple effect. Many interviewees believed that an Aboriginal person with a strong Aboriginal identity becomes productive and stable. In this case, being productive and stable is reflected in how an Aboriginal person lives his or her life. An Aboriginal person who can take life's challenges in stride, take care of his or her family, and have a strong, positive identity and self-worth is productive and stable. Many of the interviewees also pointed out that Aboriginals who are grounded in their identity would be more able to contribute to the well-being of the Aboriginal community as well as to the larger mainstream society. Some participants saw having a positive identity as a steppingstone to a productive life mentally, physically, spiritually, and academically for themselves, their family, their community, and the larger society.

Although the participants believed that there are positive benefits and outcomes to having a positive identity, they also felt that it cannot be the school's ultimate responsibility to instill a positive identity in the youth. Through various school activities and staff attitudes, the school can ensure that students are not made to feel ashamed or unworthy. However, it is not the place of the school, but rather of the families and the community as a whole, to lead the way in these teachings.

Place of School

The significance of the school in the community is another theme that emerged from the interviews. The participants discussed (a) the importance of focusing on academics to provide students with a competitive formal education; (b) appropriate Cree language, culture, and history topics in a school setting; and (c) relevant Aboriginal topics in the school curriculum. I will begin by providing a short historical commentary on schooling for Aboriginals.

The past and present formal education systems did not evolve from the Aboriginal people, but rather apart from Aboriginal communities. Education systems have been set up without regard for Aboriginal culture, languages, and histories. There were residential schools, then public schools, and now band-operated schools (which still follow provincial programs of study and curriculum). None of these allow for community control of education programming and curriculum. Although there are a few examples of positive changes in the education system as a result of including Aboriginal people and culture in programming and curriculum, they are outweighed by the number of examples of the education system's not meeting the needs of Aboriginal children and communities.

Academics. Because this Aboriginal community has a low high school graduation rate and a high dropout rate, parents and community members are very concerned with academic achievement. Many participants stressed that the school's primary role should be to ensure that students are receiving a first-rate formal education that enables them to compete successfully academically with mainstream society. This formal education would emphasize the "core" subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies, as well as computers. Many participants believe that if the school focused on its primary roles, Aboriginal students would have a better chance for a more successful future economically.

Melvin believes that everyone in the community should focus on education "because nowadays we have to educate our people. It is essential. It is the most important thing, next to health, and life. Education is very, very important."

Sam saw the role of school as

> educating the child in order to finish school. Educated up to Grade 12 and so on. You're trying to educate this child up to Grade 12 and then eventually moving on to college or university. That's what the goal is for the elementary, junior high, senior high school. You're not there to raise

> the child and go into more in-depth things that should be happening at home, the parents should be doing. You need to concentrate on the subjects like math, social, language arts, Cree instruction maybe, and all those main subjects, core subjects, what they need to get on with continuing with their education. If you concentrate on their behaviors and all these other aspects like spirituality and all these other things, you're taking away the learning component in education. You're kind of taking that away from the child; you're not fully utilizing that time to educate the children the way they should be educated in order for them to move on.

One administrator commented:

> We want to teach children more so they can fit into the mainstream society today, in today's world. Sure, it's good to learn how to put up a tipi and stuff like that, but where are you going to use that in today's society: How is it going to benefit you?

Melvin regarded education as of utmost importance in today's world because Aboriginal people cannot live separately from non-Aboriginals. The ability to understand and succeed in what he would term a *Native world and a White world* will only make Aboriginals a more successful people. Although he saw the Cree language as an important language to learn, he felt that teaching Cree cannot take precedence over English because it is so important for us to live with our White brothers and sisters: "We have to live two worlds, and we can be a powerful, powerful force if we live those two worlds strong. Knowledge of two worlds makes a person very strong."

John also considered being able to compete in larger society as important. He wanted to see Aboriginal content in the school; however,

> we have to develop our children to the standards of what is mainstream acceptable. And I think to teach our Aboriginal culture is okay; I agree with that as a Native person myself. But in terms of children to compete in the outside world, knowing their identity as Native people is not going to be enough to compete in the world. They have to be developed up to the standards—just like yourself; you're a teacher. So they have to be

> developed as a teacher so they can compete in the work industry, either on a reserve, off the reserve, in the city, small town, in an isolated community. They should fit anywhere, and that's a big task, I know that. But I think the reason I emphasize on the cultural part is that I believe that if a person is strong in their belief, in their identity, they will succeed anywhere; they will fit into mainstream anywhere.

Sandra also thought that Aboriginal people must be able to compete with the larger world just like any other person, while retaining a strong identity:

> The first thing is to prepare [students] for the world today, but let's not forget to teach them how the world was and where we came from, what we've done, how we survived, what we spoke, and how we treated one another.

She stressed that we need to always try to include Aboriginal content while emphasizing academics, but believed that Cree language, culture, and history cannot be the main focus in school because the role of the school is to prepare students for today's world.

Sam regarded the role of the school as one of educating students in the areas that are necessary to prepare them to survive in today's world. They need to be taught the same subjects that other students in the public education system are being taught to allow them to fit into mainstream society. He preferred to see an emphasis on the core subjects and computers than on Cree language, culture, and history. Sam commented:

> Our Elders always say we've got to go back to our old ways, and we have to teach our children the way we were brought up way back then and stuff like that. And to me, it's going to take a long time, maybe a lifetime, for most of these children in order to grasp the culture the way of life back then, because today in society a lot of things have changed. We're into technology; everything's done through computer nowadays, and so much technology out there. It's so hard for children to grasp what it was back then and to try and get children in that frame of mind that the old way of doing stuff is the way to go. But to me we need to teach children more so

> they can fit in into the mainstream society today, in today's world. Sure, it's good to learn how to put up a teepee and stuff like that, but where are you going to use that in today's society? How is it going to benefit you? When it comes down to university or when it comes to technology and all the things that are involved right now, it's good to know, but how is it going to benefit you? And in terms of education, the children, I believe, like I said, they need to be taught what is being taught out there in mainstream society, because they have to fit in. There's technology that they need to know about, and they have to live generally with society. And to expect them to go back the old ways is being unrealistic, I think. The way of the future is computers and fitting into society, and basically its survival, I guess, just like back then when our people had to survive as a people. They had to do whatever they had. Same thing today. You have to have computer skills, technology skills; you've got to be a people person; you've got to be flexible in terms of being able to move from one career to another. Today's society, maybe in a lifetime—they say there's four or five careers you'll have in a lifetime. Generally, that's the way it's going right now.

William also emphasized concentrating on the academics of school and including Cree language, culture, and history only if there is time in the school schedule. Although William would like his children to learn the Cree language and Aboriginal history and how Native people in the area survived in the past, he wanted these topics limited to a special Cree language and culture class or perhaps to include some topics in a social studies class. He emphasized that the school needs to prepare students for the larger world and that Cree language, culture, and history can be taught in the home. He would rather have seen time spent on the core subjects and on computers and technology to provide students with the same education that other students in mainstream society have. He made the point that, based on his own experiences,

> it's good to have our Cree culture and stuff like that. But, I mean, if I'm going to put an application some place where it's not a government organization, like if I go to work in Ft. St. John, apply for a job or something, they're not going to ask me, "How much Cree do you know?" They're going to ask me, "What experience have you got? What language

> do you speak?" - Either French or English. But they're not going to be interested in my personal background, how much I know. These are the things that I see that have to be—that's a must, because that's coming from my experience. I worked on farms too. A farmer doesn't ask me, "How many dogs do you mush?" He asks me, "What equipment can you run?" or "What can you do?" So if we get bogged down into to much of that activity, spend too much time on culture and all that, then we're lacking that preparation and classroom time. That's my personal experience from working out. Oilfield the same thing. If I'm not working for the band or anybody else, Cree's an asset. They're not going to say "Cree's an asset." "Okay, what's your experience? What language do you speak?" Well, basically it's English, but I mean, they want to find out what—see, my resume with all these pipe ceremonies and stuff, they're not going to buy my way in there, my world experience and how much education I got, how much computers I got. These are the things that are getting me stuck when I apply now. "How are your writing skills? How much computers do you got? What level do you have?" Very important, the level, grade level; that's the first thing. I tried Ft. McMurray; I phoned there, and they wanted Grade 12 equivalent just to drive a truck, just to do anything, even just to be a laborer; and if you don't have that, then you're stuck. And it's getting to be that way. The same with the certificates you got, the certification. The more courses you have, the better chance you've got in life. These are the things that have to be really looked into—not how to set up a teepee too much. It's good to have that, but I mean, let's be realistic about our changing world, because our world is changing; it's not going to wait for us. It's not going to wait for us to set up our teepee or fillet fish. It's going to go on without us. And if we get caught up too much, too many programs in that school, which is affecting the classroom time to be able to have more time on computers, modern technologies, then we're setting our students back; we're putting too much time on here when we should be focusing on this, getting ready.

One student emphasized that she would prefer to see the school focus on the core subjects and teaching the same curriculum that other public schools teach because she felt that learning these subjects is more beneficial to students in the long term. She also mentioned that during optional time she would like to see more variety of classes and topics offered rather than using that extra time for Aboriginal-oriented topics or courses.

Time and time again the participants identified an overwhelming need to emphasize academics. They regarded the school's primary role as one of preparing students for successful participation in mainstream society and wanted an education for their youth that is equal to that offered any other school in the country. As I will discuss in the theme of parental and community responsibilities, the participants stressed that the majority of Cree cultural teaching needs to rest on the shoulders of families and the community and away from the school.

Appropriate/acceptable Cree cultural topics. Although most participants desired a strong academic base in school, they thought that there is also room to teach specific aspects of Cree language, culture, and history in the school program. In relation to appropriate Cree culture topics the participants agreed that Cree language, culture, and history should not interfere with any of the core subjects; and they identified Cree cultural topics that are acceptable to be taught in a school.

All of the participants understood that learning Cree language, culture, and history in a school can play a positive role, but they stressed that it cannot dominate the school program. As stated in the last section, they felt that it is not the role of the school to promote cultural teachings, but rather the academic subjects that prepare them for the future.

In relation to this, Sandra said:

> We always have to think about our school system. I think we need to always try and balance it, but we can't concentrate on those things at the school level because we have to compete with the rest of the world.

William also talked about his concerns with Cree language and culture topics in the school curriculum:

> It's very important how much we're going to put in the schools. I'm not saying let's not have it, but, I mean, let's fine-tune how much. . . . Priority should be with regular schooling, the classes and those computers. And have Cree culture activities and events as optional. . . . If we're going to teach children our culture and stuff like that, the things that I outlined, limited, very limited, like Cree language and writing. This is something that is very good—not to deprive them their other schooling that we need; that's the key. But we can teach them to a certain extent. But to get too bogged down in Cree culture for me is not the right way.

Many participants wanted to qualify which aspects of Cree culture would be appropriate to teach in a school setting provided that there is enough room in the curriculum. In essence, the participants believed that there is a time and place for specific types of Cree cultural learning. Some aspects of Cree culture could be taught or touched on in the school setting, whereas other aspects of cultural knowledge should be left to parents and the community to teach.

All of the participants agreed that it is completely acceptable to teach traditional Aboriginal living activities at school, such as preparing fish and wild meat, making clothing and jewelry, creating arts and crafts, and creating shelters. They also felt that it was acceptable to show how Aboriginal people traditionally have done things because it gives the students a glimpse of their cultural roots, as long as it does not touch on the spiritual realm of these activities. Sam identified many of the same acceptable traditional living examples that other participants cited:

> Preparing fish, smoking fish, smoking moose meat, preparing rabbits, ducks—preparation of food; in a traditional way. And could be beading; could be making moccasins, necklaces, jewelry, traditional jewelry that

> people still now practice, setting up a teepee, because that's where most people lived back then. That's their means of shelter. So those things that people used to do in order to survive, right? That was the culture that they had; that's what they had in order to survive. . . . That would be an option for them [students] if they wanted to [learn].

All participants agreed for various reasons that children should not participate in ceremonies and rituals in school with any sort of connection to the spiritual realm and that, for example, smudging and pipe ceremonies should not be practiced or taught in school. Some believed that these aspects of culture are sacred and not appropriate to practice in a school setting. Last, another reason for limiting specific Cree cultural practices is that families should be given the power to choose and promote the spiritual practices that they want their children to learn and not have the school choose them for the families.

In reference to limiting specific Cree culture practices in a school because of its sacredness, Lynn remarked, "I don't think it should be really taught in school, because it's kind of sacred. There has to be a lot of respect for those types of things, even if it is for show or whatever, and to me it isn't right."

William also spoke of the appropriate place of ceremonies, rituals, and spiritual aspects. He contended that practices such as smudging and pipe ceremonies need to be limited and take place away from the school: "Those are sacred stuff which weren't exercised every day with the old people—certain times of the year and when they really needed, whenever they really wanted them—and they were kind of held in privacy."

Sam also cited another reason to leave spirituality and rituals out of the school: Leaving spirituality and rituals out of the school curriculum allows families to decide for themselves which beliefs, values, ceremonies, and rituals to teach as well as how they should be taught:

> Those should come from home, because for me, I believe in the Christian way. I believe in Jesus: Our Lord and Savior. But I take it up to a point where I practice it at home and in church. I'm not going to take it into the school and force some children or teachers to teach it in their classroom. It's something that should start at home and should be kept at home or at church or in community-oriented activities. To me that's the way it should be, because you can't force it upon them. You're going into their beliefs, and that's not right.

One Elder, John, commented that it would be appropriate to learn about rituals and ceremonies from books; however they should not be practiced in the school setting:

> When we talk about spirituality, to try and teach the children about the history of spirituality, you don't necessarily have to do it in the schools physically, but they should know about it. They should know in a book form or under social studies or whatever, history, it should be taught in a book form at least. And they have that option later on if they want to be involved in ceremonies.

Relevant Aboriginal topics in school. Many participants discussed the need to make school topics, especially in Cree language class, social studies, and language arts, more relevant to Aboriginal students of the area. They believed that making school topics more culturally relevant will make school topics more interesting as well as increase Aboriginal students' understanding. They also saw as important ensuring that their Cree language and culture reflect the norms, behaviors, and traditions of the area.

One participant endorsed learning historical topics such as local Wapoose Lake history, First Nations history, treaties, band and government structures, and the names and accomplishments of past band leaders. Elder John explained that topics need to be more specific to the region in which students live:

> Something that will be real to the young people, something that they know about, like knowing what their leaderships are, who their government is, right in their own community—their Chief and Council, their municipal council, and both their MLA and all their Alberta government and its municipal acts and all that, and legislation and court systems, and the federal government and its system. Those are the things that should be taught in the school. It doesn't serve any purpose for children to study about China or Germany or Russia, but I think it would be more helpful to know their own backyard.

Sandra also saw the value of Aboriginal topics in the school curriculum:

> I think the history is very important. I wouldn't want my child to start learning Polish or French when they can't even speak their own language. That's a total discrepancy, a total contradiction. . . . And also it's important, why am I a [Wapoose Lake] member? How did I get here? What is the difference between a treaty and non-treaty? We should learn about those. Again, I'm not saying don't take all the time away from the main courses; that's not what I'm saying. But I think the core courses should be a little bit more. We should have books on [Wapoose Lake]. Most of us know that, but do our children know? What does it mean to them when I say "a Treaty Indian"? You have treaty rights, and that's history. And what about the relationships, the relations, how you're related to this person?

Finally, a few participants pointed out that when schools implement cultural activities, time and effort need to be taken to ensure that the topics are taught with respect and that protocols are followed. Lynn spoke of her own experiences in school in which she reported that the person leading a cultural activity was not doing it right. She remembered:

> Well, there's certain ways you're supposed to smudge, and whoever's doing the smudge, they should actually know how to do it or how it's done, because I had experiences at a school where they didn't do it right. They didn't go in a circle the way they're supposed to, or they'd just use a lighter to light it. They didn't do it right.

Cree language instruction is a topic that the community participants unanimously felt should be taught in the school because it is an important aspect of Cree culture that truly identifies the Aboriginal people of the area. It is also a part of Cree culture that some lamented is slowly disappearing. According to Sandra:

> I think we utilize Cree in schools because we know a lot of them don't speak it at home. The parents don't want them to continue with it, and I think that's at least one thing First Nations should try and keep, at least their language. And it should continue in schools, yes, but not to take away the whole time away from the students. They need to learn what's out there and to keep up with the world.

Conclusion. The participants believed that schools should focus on academic core courses and prepare students for economic success in mainstream society. They saw school playing a limited role in promoting Cree language, culture, and history; however, this should not be done at the expense of the core subjects. Although they acknowledged that knowing and taking pride in their identity is important for students, they believed that the school's primary purpose is not to form the identity of students. Schools can promote Cree language and history and perhaps even promote a general understanding of all aspects of Cree culture such as the learning that comes from books. However, schools ought not to teach or practice rituals or ceremonies that involve the spiritual realm. The main emphasis at the school level is to teach students in ways that enable them to succeed in mainstream society. As long as there is no direct reference to the spiritual realm and such teaching does not interfere with Alberta Education's regular curriculum, some focus on Cree language, culture, and history could be included in the school program.

Parent and Community Roles and Responsibilities

Another theme that emerged from my discussions with the community members was the roles and responsibilities of parents and the community in teaching the Cree language and culture to their children. First, the participants agreed that it is the role and responsibility of parents, extended family, and the community as a whole to nurture and raise children and to guide them from an early age. They also maintained that it is primarily the responsibility of the family and community to teach Cree culture and language because Cree cultural teachings from home have a greater and longer lasting impact. Furthermore, they pointed out that it is best to leave the majority of Cree cultural teachings to the home because it allows the parents and families to decide what to teach, how to teach it, and when to teach it. It also shows respect for all religious denominations and for the values and beliefs practiced in the community. These perspectives will be discussed in this section.

The participants strongly agreed that Cree cultural and language teachings need to begin in the home when a child is born—not only when he or she begins preschool—to establish a strong foundation and to continue throughout the child's life. Lynette advised, "If you're going to teach this culture and language program, language and culture program, then you should start even before that child gets to school. Give them that background; given them that foundation."

Sandra viewed educating children as a full-time responsibility that cannot be limited to school hours and needs to begin as soon as they are born and continue throughout their lives. Education is a lifelong endeavor. In Sandra's words,

> education is everything. We turn around, we do things, we talk to another person; education is everything. It doesn't have to come from books and everything, or reading, but *everything* is an education. Watching my grandson make paper planes. I sat there and watched him. He wanted to make the perfect one, and I just sat there and watched him, trying out all—I learned something!

The participants also stressed that parents, extended family, and the community need to be responsible for Cree cultural and language teachings and not pass the duty on to the school. Schools have their place in the community; however, it is not to teach the children all aspects of life, but rather to focus on the core academics. Lynette remarked that her father had just recently spoken about the responsibilities of parents:

> He [her father] said that we've never expected the teachers to talk to our children about what's right and what's wrong or how they should behave. We felt that was our responsibility at home to talk to our children, and we did talk to our children.

Melvin had also observed that the school was now teaching values such as respect and the appropriate way to socialize when, in his opinion, they should be taught at home and not during school time:

> Respect, behavior. Very important to teach children that, because what I see here, what the teachers are doing here, that should be done in the home. The teachers are trying to teach these children respect and behavior; that should come from the home, and the teachers would teach when the kids got here because they would have that teaching at home.

Lynette talked about her experiences growing up in a traditional Cree environment where everyone shared the responsibility of parenting. She believed that family and community members should rely on each other to build a strong Cree language and culture foundation:

> It should be the parents, the grandparents, even the extended family, because I remember growing up, I wasn't close to my granny's house; I wasn't next door. Those old people, my great-uncle and my great-aunt, they kept an eye on *everybody's* kids, depending on whose house you were close to, where you were playing, and it wasn't a case of, "You don't feel like my child." It was everybody's responsibility. So I grew up where I got used to different people yelling at me not to do this or not to do that or where I am. That should be part of values, community values.

Lynette expanded on the importance of community members' helping each other by referring to a popular saying on buttons, t-shirts, and stickers around the community:

> I always think of that little button that says, "It takes a community to raise a child," and I think it's right. And if you're talking about teaching Cree language and culture and history, it's going to take the community, everybody, not just certain groups, and I think that's where we're running into problems right now, because it's just us as educators and the group of targets, which is the children, and there's nothing in between. And we only have these kids how many hours; the rest of the time they're with their parents, or whoever they're with. But that brings us back to parental involvement.

John cautioned that if parents and community do not take their responsibilities seriously, it would have dire consequences for Cree culture and Cree language loss:

> To retain one's culture, it's a tough task, and we cannot leave the teaching of our language and culture absolutely to the school, because parents have to take responsibility. We must, I guess, do something or we'll lose our mother tongue and our culture. That's, well, how it is important to me.

Sam felt that parents need to accept the responsibility for raising their children in the manner that they prefer. They need to make a conscious effort to educate their children in whatever values and beliefs are important to them, rather than leaving the school with the choice. He firmly believed that both the school and parents have a role in the upbringing of their children. The school needs to follow the curriculum and prepare students for the future, and parents need to play a more conscious and more significant role in raising their children:

> Parents are given back that responsibility of, if they want their child to learn about smudging, about spirituality, about respect and stuff like that, those things can happen in the evenings as an option; and it gives responsibility to the parents. If the parents really want their child to learn something like that, right? I'm sure they'll drive their children seven o'clock in the evening, drop them off, have a one-hour or two-hour session on whatever, respect, honesty, or whatever the case may be, or rituals that they do. If they want to teach that, like I said, they can happen; but it has to be away from school time, because at the same time we have to follow a curriculum, as you know, with Alberta Education. Those can be options. If the community wants it, if the parents are willing to do it, sure, it could happen. But they have to play a role in it too. You can't let the professionals do it for you in class; the parents have to play a role too. The only role they're playing right now is getting the kids up, feeding them breakfast, and off to school, and that's it; it's forgotten about, and then they come home.

The participants discussed the significance of family, extended family, and the entire community as the main transmitters of Cree culture and language because, ultimately, teaching Cree culture at home has more of an impact on the children than teaching it at school has. Parents can spend more time on teachings and reinforce the cultural teachings through practice, thereby ensuring that cultural teachings have a deeper, more meaningful impact. Children will see the importance of the teachings. They will be more likely to internalize them if the teachings come from the home environment, such as from an Elder, aunt, uncle, parent, or grandparent.

John spoke of the importance of parents and community in reinforcing Cree cultural teachings, as well as the limitations of schools in attempting to do this. He recognized that the school can teach Cree culture and language to a certain degree; however, the children cannot be expected to retain the cultural teaching if the parents do not also promote them:

> That's what the teaching is faced against, because you can try and teach a kid here for five, six hours in school, in class, about an attitude, about behavior, about who they are. And then they go home for eighteen hours, and they can watch movies, they can watch their parents maybe fighting and drinking and all that, their siblings, older siblings. So how much can you as a teaching person influence that child when even your time is limited compared to how much he's on the outside? So that's why it's really important that the parents need to be involved. The parents need to raise their children and teach their children the proper conduct, and then it'll be a lot easier for teaching people to take the child and try and teach.

Also emphasized was that the worst thing that community members can do is to take on a passive attitude towards raising children. John contended that, by not being proactive and guiding the children and youth of the community, parents and community members are in essence accepting possible negative behavior and thereby allowing it to continue: "The worst word for Aboriginal people today is *Keyum* [*whatever* in Cree]. If twelve-, thirteen-, fourteen-year olds smoke, '*Keyum*.' That can excuse what kids are doing."

John suggested that community members need to be involved if they want Cree language and culture promoted in the community. Cree culture can remain strong only if teachings come from families and are passed on from generation to generation:

> Girls were taught these things by their mothers and their grandmothers. It was handed down generation to generation. . . . I feel, as you grow up,

> your mother should have taught you, and she would have been taught by your grandmother and her mother, and that's how. That's why they were strong there. And the men taught their son; the father then was taught by his dad, his father.

The participants observed that Cree cultural teachings are better taught in a natural setting where proper conduct and protocol can be followed. Parents and the community have the ability to ensure that this is happening. For example, learning about a Cree feast or sweat lodge from a book does not have the same effect as participating and experiencing one. Parents and community members also have the ability to instill Cree cultural teachings appropriately according to Cree traditions and to decide? who will offer the teachings, how much will be taught, and when and where to teach them. Lynette cautioned:

> You can't just suddenly decide, "This is what we're going to teach, and this is how we are going to teach it." We need input, because a lot of things I know about my culture, spirituality or otherwise, I know you can't teach in a classroom. Better off teaching in a natural setting.

Sam and Lynette believed that community members can take the initiative to set up community-based Cree cultural activities. These clubs could focus on Cree history, dance, language, arts and crafts, storytelling, feasts, ceremonies, traditions, or spirituality. Our own community members knowledgeable in Cree cultural activities could be used as resources in evening or weekend classes that might offer round dancing, parenting skills programs with a Cree cultural focus, or the Cree language. These Cree cultural initiatives would be available for children, parents, and any community members interested in learning Cree cultural knowledge. This would give community members the option to decide what they deem appropriate for their children to learn while at the same time giving the responsibility for promoting Cree culture to the community and ensuring that the Cree cultural knowledge that is passed on is from the region.

Some of the participants commented that if Cree cultural knowledge originates in the home, parents know which spiritual teachings are appropriate for their children to learn. If these choices are made at home and not in a school setting, no spiritual beliefs will encroach on those of another belief system. The participants pointed out that the community is made up of many religious belief systems, such as Cree traditional, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Born-Again Christians. Consequently, not emphasizing one belief over another in the community's band-operated school shows respect for the other denominations. They also saw it as more appropriate that spiritual teachings or other sensitive cultural teachings that are regarded as sacred be taught in the home environment. This would include ceremonies and rituals that deal with the spiritual realm such as prayer, smudging, and pipe ceremonies.

William addressed respect for each other:

> Community involvement is very important in order to make things work. *That's* the spiritual part of it. We have to respect each other for what we believe and how we believe and what to exercise at home. Even the other denominations, I don't have anything against them, but I have my own denomination which I direct my children. And it goes the same with that cultural stuff.

Melvin also talked about the need for respecting the diversity of the community: "We need to respect one another as different and as people coming from different denominations. I respect people that use whatever works for them, and in turn they should [show] respect."

From Sam's perspective ensuring that one belief does not encroach on another is importance:

> Those should come from home, because for me I believe in the Christian way. I believe in Jesus, right? Our Lord and Savior. But I take it up to a point where I practice it at home and in church; I'm not going to take it into the school and force some children or teachers to teach it in their classroom. It's something that should start at home and should be kept at home or at church or in community-oriented activities. To me that's the way it should be, because you can't force anybody to—you can't force it upon them, because you're going into their beliefs.

The participants emphasized that Cree cultural teachings need to begin at home first. By ensuring that the values, beliefs, and all aspects of Cree culture stem from community members, the community will remain strong and whole. Parents and communities need to build a strong foundation for children from the time that they are young and throughout their lives. Reinforcing Cree culture will help to maintain the community's cohesiveness, and the children can then be assured that the school will promote academics to better equip them to deal with the future. Schools are not the central source of Cree culture and language, but a supportive tool.

Community Tensions

The fourth theme to emerge from my discussions with my participants was the fact that there are underlying tensions in the community with regard to implementing Cree culture content in the band-operated school. Four main tensions were identified that are not independent of each other, but are interrelated. The first tension stems from parents' and community members' desire that a band-operated school program meet the needs and wants of the majority of the community. They felt that it is important to have a voice in its design but that the community is made up of too many differing opinions on what is and what is not appropriate for the school to teach and practice with regard to Cree culture. This makes it a difficult issue to address. The crux of the issue is trying to determine and accommodate everyone's needs in a respectful manner.

The participants also addressed a second source of community tension that affects the school and stems from the perceived lack of respect for the various beliefs and perspectives of community members.

A third tension that emerged from the discussions was that there are aspects of Cree culture—in particular, Native spirituality—that are being taught in the school that many community members of various other beliefs regard as inappropriate.

The fourth tension stems from the perception of many community members that the school is not communicating with the community to ensure that its members understand what the school program involves and that the program is a reflection of what the community wants.

These ongoing tensions in the community have a negative impact on the band-operated school. Many of the participants contended that the community and the school need to deal with these tensions before the community will whole heartedly support the school. These are important issues to the community members because the popular view is that a band-operated school is intended to serve the entire membership and not just one sector. In this section I will further elaborate on these community tensions.

One tension that the participants identified is that Wapoose Lake community members expect the school to reflect the wants and needs of its band membership as determined by the community as a whole. The difficulty, however, is that Wapoose Lake is made up of many members with a wide range of opinions about what subject matter is appropriate to be taught and practiced at the school. There are those who want the school to focus only on traditional subjects such as language arts, math, science, and social studies, with no focus on Cree culture. Others believe that there should be a limited focus on Cree culture, and still others who want all aspects of Cree culture to be taught as well as core subjects such as language arts, math, and computers. William articulated the problem: "Some don't want nothing to do with Native culture, some say it's good, and some say it's *no* good. So we're kind of stuck, struggling, trying to find out where the happy medium is."

Although it could be a formidable task, some participants emphasized that there must be community input into the school program. This would ensure that there is not only one focus on any one individual's or group's perception of which aspects of Cree culture are appropriate to teach and practice in school, but rather that everyone's opinions are taken into consideration. This is important because one opinion does not represent the voice of the majority of the community members.

According to Sam, that is what is currently happening in the school: There is a focus on the ideas of one small group regarding which aspects of Cree culture should be promoted. A few Elders and some management people

> want to instill that [their beliefs] into children, into people, into other people. They want the people to follow what they're following, and that's where we are today. . . . People and children are being pushed into something that maybe they didn't want.

William also agreed the community needs to be consulted about the school's vision to avoid feelings of animosity towards the school and to show respect. He has observed many Cree spiritual activities being practiced in the school, but no other denomination's spiritual activities, such as catechism. "You have to reach out to the community and see how much is it, how much is enough, so you're not offending somebody else's beliefs, because right now that's what's happening."

Sam remembered a time that he had failed to get community input when he was negotiating the building of the band-administered school:

> I was involved in the negotiations of building the school. I got caught up in that, actually believing that that was the way to go, because I was a council member at the time for the nation, and I worked with some Elders and management people in negotiating for this school, and they really pushed that Native culture content and all that stuff that's involved. program development. They wanted Indian culture and all that stuff to be within that. And I really pushed for it, because I figure that's what the community wanted, that's what the Elders wanted, and I really was heavily involved in the negotiations with it, getting the school on reserve. Now, looking back, maybe I should have sat back and kind of thought about it at the time in saying, "Is this what the people really want?" Maybe I should have took the time and said, "Look, is this what [Wapoose Lake] really wants? Or is it just the people that I'm working with? Is that just what they want?" Now I'm going back, I should have went to the people and asked them, right? I should have had a meeting, a membership meeting, a public meeting, and say, "Look, I'm out there speaking on your behalf and negotiating for this eight-million-dollar school that we are going to build. Now, what do you want in this school? How do you want it to be built? because this is what these people want that I'm working with as Elders and as advisors.

Now the school leadership has to go back to the community members and find out what they believe the school is doing wrong: "Look, we see that you're not sending your children to the school. What is the problem? Is it the culture, or what is it?"

In addition to expressing numerous opinions on the role of Cree culture in the school, the participants identified another related tension: the lack of respect from many community members for each others' various beliefs and opinions on Cree culture and spirituality. Rather than community members coming together and showing respect for each others' beliefs, there is animosity because of the varied opinions.

John spoke of the difficulty that some people have in respecting other denominations for reasons that he could not really understand:

> We need to respect one another as different and as people coming from different denominations. I respect people that use whatever works for them, and in turn they should respect—a lot of times spirituality is just not respected by some other beliefs, and I don't know why. Maybe they had bad experiences before.

Sandra stressed that for the school to operate better, the community members need to come together and work together for the sake of their children. People need to have a strong and respectful relationship for each other. Sandra implored:

> But let's don't concentrate trying to get you to believe what I believe. I think that's where the struggle is: We just don't respect one another and accept each other's beliefs. Accepting one another is the most [important], I think, accepting you and respecting you as an individual. But we're too busy fighting whose—that's the way I see it now—we're too busy trying to fight whose God is much more stronger, powerful. I mean, jeez, come on. We can't misuse our Creator like that. We are all human beings and God's

> children. That's how I see it. And let's not push it to have our children believe what I believe because they will decide. They will decide when they are eighteen. They will decide which way to turn. And I'm not going to punish them or discipline them just because they didn't continue with my belief.

Sandra also lamented the damage done to the children by the community members' continuously working against each other. She saw it as very important to

> stop fighting amongst each other, stop fighting because my belief is much stronger than yours. What are we doing with our young people? We're just confusing them. A lot of times that's how I see it. We're the ones who are confusing them. I'm not saying let's all take the one road; there's all kinds of roads that you take.

The third tension that some participants identified stems from the existing belief of the parents and community members that the band-operated school is teaching and practicing all aspects of Cree culture. In particular, they are concerned that the band-operated school is teaching sensitive topics such as those that involve the spiritual realm. Several of the participants reported that many community members believe that this is inappropriate and disrespectful and that it is not the role of the school to be involved in spiritual or religious aspects of Cree culture, but that responsibility ought to be left to families in their homes. As previously discussed in this chapter (the place of school), many participants argued that the role of the school should be to focus on traditional core subjects and prepare students for jobs and careers that will enable them to support families. They considered the practice of Cree spirituality in the school disrespectful to the other religious denominations in the community as well as to some who believe in Native spirituality because spiritual practices are sacred practices and are thus not appropriate to be practiced in the school.

Apparently, concerned band members have been approaching members in various leadership positions and accusing the administration of the band-operated school of promoting aspects of culture that they see as not only inappropriate in a school setting, but also not the role of school in general. Sam mentioned that community members of all different beliefs and opinions had complained to him that too much Cree culture is being taught in the school and that they are losing faith in the education system:

> I've heard that over the years I've been involved, there's too much cultural and spiritual stuff that happen in the school that parents don't agree with. People that are traditional too, that believe in Native culture, are saying that they think there's too much Native spirituality happening in the school.

He felt that that many of the community members are in essence punishing the school because of the misinformation surrounding the issue of Cree culture in the school:

> We have a hundred and thirty-nine students that are registered at our elementary school, which is half, almost half of what the school is supposed to have in there. And it's due to the fact of the other stuff that we've talked about previously, about spirituality and culture and that stuff. There's some big misinformation, misconception of what is being done in the school. But it's something that we have to deal with, that we have to change, and it will happen; it's going to happen.
>
> Sam reported that parents had approached him to say:
>
> "Why don't you take those things out of there, and you'll have kids coming to that school? Why don't you educate the kids instead of telling them how to light a pipe and how to smoke it and all this? Why don't you concentrate on computers or technology and stuff like that? That's something that will mean something to the child that you're preparing for the future."

The source of the fourth tension is that the education administration has not clearly and effectively communicated with Wapoose Lake community members. According to many of the participants, the school is not ensuring that the community understands the goals and objectives of the school program, especially with regard to Cree culture content in the school. This lack of communication with the community encourages misconceptions and rumors about what is going on in the school. Consequently, there is a lack of community support for the school.

According to Sam, misconceptions also occur when parents see a spiritual event practiced once in the school and conclude that it happens on a regular basis:

> For example, the children's feast that happened in the fall. . . . They see a guy doing a ritual, throwing food in the fire and praying and all this stuff, doing the ritual. . . . When you have it like that in a public setting, there's a lot of people; you have two or three hundred people coming in for this feast. They see this being done, so what do they automatically think? Well, they think this is being practiced at the school.

Because there are so many interpretations of what 'Cree culture' means and, consequently, what it means to teach Cree language, culture, and history in the school, that participants suggested that the school leaders need to clarify what the school means to curb any miscommunication about what it is endorsing.

Sandra saw a need to diminish these misperceptions. The school needs to take an active role in ensuring that the community understands and interprets clearly what the school is promoting and to make an effort to do public relations work to inform the parents and community members about the school program.

Sandra maintained, "I think the school should explain it a little bit more: What do they mean by *culture*? What do they mean by *traditional*?"

Sam also recognized a definite need for public relations work. He had made plans to hold a public meeting with the band members "to explain what the school plans and goals are, where education is going, and what the new school year is going to hold for the band-operated school."

According to the participants, the school also needs to make an effort to ensure that the entire community has input into the school program with regard to Cree culture content. The school must reach out to the community and ask the band members what they want from their school. Sam stressed that the people involved in the band-operated school need to be

> sensitive to what the people want—"the people" meaning the nation, the membership that's going to be affected by whatever is taught or is practiced in that school. Be sensitive to it. Don't let a group of people that are out there pushing what they want personally to happen, because it's just a small percentage. It could be one percent of the people that want what they want. Turn it around; ask the ninety-nine percent of the people, ask them what they want. It's only right.

Sam also considered his role as a representative important in working with the entire community to make the band-operated school a success in increasing its acceptance and registration numbers:

> As a director, as a board member or whatever, you kind of have to be there looking out for the other people that cannot speak for themselves or represent themselves. So you're kind of representing these people, and you can't use your personal judgment, your personal belief in the decisions that you're going to be making, because it's going to impact the people, the community, the nation; and you kind of have to watch how you go about it. I guess that it's a touchy thing. And you've got to work with the community; you've got to talk to the people, be out there with them, and get to know what they want. Don't be out there just living in your own little

> world and dictating what should be taught or what should be brought into the school. Get to know the people, get to know the community, and base your decisions on that.

Sandra suggested that the people of the community need to be patient and give the school a chance to grow, and the school administrators need to take time to evaluate the school program:

> I don't know what we're doing with our school here. We're trying to just punish it because we didn't let it grow. We have to take time to grow. We learn; let's don't make it was a waste of all these years to try and make it work. Let's evaluate it and see what we can do to make it better, a better school, and to respect one another.

As community leader, Sam recommended that the school take the lead and deal with the whole issue of Cree language, culture, and history in the school. A decision needs to be made to find out what the community thinks is appropriate to be taught in the school:

> We're at a crossroads where [Wapoose Lake] has to make a decision; we have to make a decision as a board where we want to go from here. Are we going to do some major changes, or just continue the way we're going and let our education system fall through the cracks and eventually crumble and be left with nothing?

All of these community tensions have a negative impact on the band-operated school and impede its development and growth. Community members are not coming together to discuss common ideas on which elements of Cree culture should be taught in the school. Sam believed that the community is in fact punishing and not supporting the school by not enrolling their children and that, partially as a reflection of the lack of community support in the band-operated school, enrollment is not reaching its maximum capacity. The perceptions and reputation of the community school are also not improving.

Many saw community members as hesitant or refusing to register their children at the school based on their perceptions of what the school program offers with regard to Cree culture. Sam argued, "It's stopping parents from sending their kids there because they don't want to expose their kids to that [Cree spirituality]."

All of these unresolved tensions have led to setbacks in the school. Although this is a sensitive issue for the participants, they knew that it is important for school and community to deal with the issue of Cree culture content in the school to increase community support for the school and encourage them to enroll their children in it. The various community groups with their differing opinions need to communicate with the school to determine which aspects of Cree culture specifically are considered appropriate, while still respecting every person's opinions and perspectives.

Upon further analysis of all of the themes, I identified a significant detail. The participants, although they did not see it this way, have many more common interests than they or I realized initially. Although these community members spoke of community tensions hampering the success of the band-operated school, I realized that these tensions are much more perceptions and interpretations than real tensions. On the surface, it seemed that there were various opinions on the implementation of Cree culture in the school; however, after deeper reflection and analysis, I became aware that the members of all community groups actually have many mutual interests and that they and their beliefs share common ground.

A Venn diagram (see Appendix B for an example), which uses two or more interlocking circles to compare two or more ideas in a way that shows both similarities and differences), in this situation would show that many community members have similar and mutual interests with regard to the educational well-being of the children in the community. They have more of the same hopes, fears, and concerns about the education of their children and youth than they currently realized. The participants expressed various reasons to explain the way that they envisioned the inclusion of the Cree language, culture, and history in the school, including religion, respect for other belief systems, subject appropriateness, and academic excellence.

My basic objective in this study has been to present data and conduct analyses based on the visions of First Nation members of one Aboriginal community. Their discussions addressed the inclusion of Aboriginal languages, cultures, and histories in the design of First Nation school programs and curricula. The participants in this study provided valuable insights. They did not limit their discussion to the design of the school program, but spoke also of identity, the role of the school, the roles and responsibilities of parents and family, and the community tensions surrounding this issue of schooling. The participants, just like many Aboriginal parents, want their children taught to be proud of their culture and heritage, and to be taught those things needed for success in mainstream world.

CHAPTER V:

FINAL ANALYSIS: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When I began this research study, I imagined that I would conclude with a list of Cree cultural topics and themes that Wapoose Lake community members would like to have taught and promoted in their band-operated school. I also assumed that the participants' ideas of how much Cree language, culture, and history should be included in the school program would be influenced by their spiritual beliefs. I believed that certain community members with strong ties to a specific belief system would not want Cree culture taught in the band-operated school and that other community members with strong connections to another belief system would advocate for all aspects of Cree culture to be taught in the school. During the data-collection process, I realized that my initial assumptions were somewhat off track because the participants did not provide a list of appropriate Cree cultural topics. Nor did they base their decisions on their spiritual beliefs as I had assumed they would. Unexpectedly, the participants expanded the discussion of Cree language, culture, and history to include not only what is and is not appropriate in a school setting, but also identity formation; the place of the school in the community; the responsibilities of parents, family, and community; and the significance of community tensions surrounding the topic of Cree-culture inclusion in their band-operated school. In the next section I will summarize and elaborate on these findings and then make recommendations to foster change.

Summary of the Findings

Throughout the course of my interviews with the participants, a number of themes emerged that addressed, to varying degrees, the current literature on Native education. Although it is not my intent to reiterate or base my findings on the conclusions of the other research, it is important to understand how these findings fit into some of the existing literature on Cree language and culture in schools.

In stating that schools that are band controlled or have a high Aboriginal population should reflect the academic, cultural, and emotional needs of their students rather than those of the mainstream society, the interviewees in this project validated the literature (Alberta Learning, 2005; Archibald, 1995; Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Battiste, 1998; Hampton, 1995; Indian and Northern Affairs, 2002b; Kirkness, 1992, 1999; Skinner, 1999; and others). Other areas of significance in the Native education literature included the need for educators to have a deeper understanding of the association between the schooling processes and the cultures, values, and beliefs of the students, the significance of enhanced parent and community involvement in the education system, the need for pre-service and cross-cultural training for teachers, the need for more Aboriginal teachers in schools, and relevant and culturally appropriate education programs with curricula and teaching/learning styles that effectively meet the needs of Aboriginal students. Because the research question was open-ended and focused on the inclusion of Cree language, culture and history in school programs, the interviewees were free to raise those issues that they felt were significant to that focus. The factors identified in the literature, and referred to above, were not raised directly in the interviewees' comments as significant to the question.

In addition to the literature cited in chapter 2, major government documents and reports such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), and the Final Report on the Minister's National Working Group on Education (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002b) have indicated, as did the research participants, that it is important that Aboriginal people have a strong cultural identity and, simultaneously, an equally strong academic base that will enable them to "walk with ease and confidence in two worlds" (p. 1). My participants clearly saw the need to improve the situations of their children, which suggests, in agreement with the literature, that having strong positive identities will better enable Aboriginal students to cope successfully with the many challenges and decisions that they will have to face throughout their lives. Although the literature and the interviewees both pointed to the significance of a positive individual identity for schooling success, there seemed to be some disagreement about the best way to instill such a positive identity in a child or youth. Dawson (1988) believed that the school can play an important role in instilling a positive identity, but many of my research participants believed that the development of a strong cultural identity in a child is best left to parents and the community to promote and support.

The participants did not stress the inclusion of Cree cultural activities in the school as a necessity, but this cannot be interpreted as a devaluing of their

Cree identities. They clearly stressed the importance of students' having strong identities and pointed out that a positive identity will lead to a better future physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. However, they did not see the school as the body responsible for teaching Native culture or spirituality to the children, despite the relationship of cultural values and spirituality to the development of individual and group identity.

The literature that I reviewed clearly revealed that parental and community involvement enhances school programming and curriculum by making it more relevant to the Aboriginal community. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), Butterfield and Pepper (1992), and Kirkness (1992) contended that improved parent and community input could eliminate the notion of schools as external institutions with no connection to the communities that they serve. Schools could potentially be set up to reflect Aboriginal cultures and values. The community participants wanted their school to have a specific role in the community, and they described the school as an institution that is separate from the community. This distinction was not described in negative terms.

In contrast to the direction suggested in much of the literature (Archibald, 1995; Battiste, 1998; Elofson & Elofson, 1987; Reyhner, 1992), many of the community members expressed a desire for the school to focus primarily on academic excellence or more standard measures of academic achievement in education. It is of note that a review of the reports and formal positions of Aboriginal organizations showed that this focus generally agrees with the directions recommended in the literature. The Assembly of First Nations (1988), for example, cautioned that schools in Aboriginal communities need to be a reflection of the Aboriginal community's values and beliefs rather than mainstream values and beliefs.

The participants in this study, I would suggest, regarded the place of the school in a more traditional way, a way that began with the establishment of formal European schools to educate their Aboriginal children. They experienced the first 'formal' school as a very specific place, sometimes set within the geographical boundaries of the community, but always a very distinct and different 'place' from the Aboriginal or First Nation community. From this perspective, it seems logical that the participants would stress that the education system needs to focus on preparing Aboriginal students to gain those skills and knowledge that would more likely ensure success in mainstream society and to leave the responsibility for most of the cultural teachings and all of the spiritual teachings to the parents, families, and the rest of the community.

Archibald et al. (2002), Reyhner (1992) and Kirkness (1998) all suggested that Aboriginal students can experience academic success through educational programs that promote the traditional values and beliefs of Aboriginal people. The community members whom I interviewed commented on the value of incorporating Aboriginal history, arts and crafts, language, and traditional living activities into the school program, which they encouraged the school to include in ways that do not interfere with the core academic program. Further, many of the participants felt that it is important that Cree cultural activities not involve any spiritual or religious areas, especially because some Cree cultural teachings are sacred and not appropriately taught in a school setting. An additional point for consideration is that the school needs to respect those community members who do not adhere to the traditional Cree spiritual practices and ways and hence do not wish their children to be influenced in that direction.

Most of the participants felt that it is ultimately the role of the parents and the home to be the main source of teaching cultural identity, pride, values, and spiritual beliefs. The school ought to support these areas, but the parents, family, and community must build the foundations for these aspects and sustain them through their own teachings and practices. The interviewees felt that each institution in the community has its own role and its own responsibility and that each institution needs to abide by those roles and responsibilities. The school has its own place and a responsibility to fulfill, as do the parents, the family, and the community. Parents, according to the participants, have the ability and the authority to decide what is or is not appropriate to teach their children at the school. This belief is foundational to the idea that parents and families have a larger responsibility for instilling Cree language, culture, and history in their children than the school does. Although schools could possibly teach all aspects of Cree language, these teachings will more likely continue if families practice them as well.

In places where the school is or becomes the main source of transmitting and instilling Cree culture in children and youth, there are other factors that possibly need to be considered. The implications of the school's being the main source of Cree cultural teaching may be that the students will regard the school and the teachers in the school who are not from the community or Aboriginal as 'experts' on Cree culture rather than their own family, Aboriginal leaders, and philosophers. A consideration of who is teaching the various aspects of Cree language, culture, and history and how they are being taught was not part of this thesis, but that is not to deny its importance in planning or designing a school program.

The issue of tensions in the community regarding Cree culture in the school program was an interesting and important aspect of the study. The literature I examined did not mention the differing opinions or possible tensions on the subject of implementing Aboriginal culture, language, and history in schools. Although researchers made the point that Aboriginal communities can differ from each other in languages, values, beliefs, and norms, they did not refer to the fact that Aboriginal people's views within one community can differ significantly on the questions that surround a proposal to implement Aboriginal language, culture, and history programs in a school. Generally, the implementation or promotion of various programs or parts of them, or even Aboriginal cultural activities, implies that Aboriginal people agree as a whole that all aspects of Aboriginal culture are desirable in schools that have a high number of Aboriginal students (Alberta Learning, 2005; ATA, 2004). In this study the participants spoke of the difficulty of living in such a diverse community with so many different viewpoints that must be brought together to address questions and issues with regard to Cree language, culture, and history programming for the band-operated school.

According to some of the participants, tensions within the community can also stem from a misrepresentation of the current school program and a lack of communication between the community and school leaders about school programming itself. The participants commented that such factors have significant and negative impacts on the local band-operated school, including low student registration and low overall community support.

However, in the end, most of the participants spoke directly in pointing out that their expectations of the school are that it is set up to emphasize academic achievement in core subjects and to ensure academic success for their children; further to this, they saw a need for parents and the community to take the lead in promoting and teaching Cree language and culture in the homes. This seemed to be especially true in relation to the spiritual aspects of Cree culture, and were observable where some of the comments seemed to be merging the terms "culture" and "spirituality". While such preliminary discourse analysis was an ongoing and necessary part of my interaction with the participants because of language competency factors, it is merely a surface suggestion of a need for a greater depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise than I am able to offer, and further, one that points to a research project far beyond the scope of this work.

Recommendations

During the research process I learned a great deal about the community and myself. I have gained both greater knowledge on and insight into the issue of Cree language, culture, and history in schools. Although the findings of this study are not comprehensive or conclusive, they do demonstrate that there is still much to be investigated and learned. They also have shown the complexity of the question. A few recommendations have emerged from this study.

The first recommendation is that the community needs to continue making a focused effort to identify the shared interests of community members and community groups to design a Cree language, culture, and history program that will satisfy the community members. The leaders could set up more community meetings or administer a community survey. The various groups and individuals of the community need to go beyond their ideological belief systems and begin to identify the common interests of each group in the community and to work within those common interests. It is important to identify the mutual interests of all parties so that trust can be established and problem solving can begin. Appendix C includes an example of a problem-solving approach.

The second recommendation is that curriculum developers, directors, and various education departments need to bear in mind that each community is different. Because each community will have its own set of needs and wants, attention must be given to these regional differences. The emphasis in one community may be to include all aspects of Cree culture in the school curriculum and school program, but this may not be the same requirement of another community.

The third recommendation is that there needs to be a comprehensive examination of this community's viewpoints on the design of band-operated school programs with regard to the inclusion of Cree language, culture, and history. These findings are limited and cannot be expected to be representative of the entire community or of any other community or situation.

The fourth recommendation is that program planners and curriculum developers need to seriously consider and focus on the questions of how, by what means, and through what processes can the school incorporate Aboriginal language, culture, and history into program planning and designing a program to meet the needs of Aboriginal students. In this study I discussed with the participants only what direction the school should take in incorporating aspects of Cree culture into school programming and curriculum and not how the school and community can meet these needs.

As I reflect on this study, I am better equipped and more enlightened on the dynamics of this community and the issues around designing Cree language, culture, and history programs/curricula for inclusion in general school programs. For example, the people who engaged with me in this process made it clear to me that the spirituality aspect of culture cannot be simply inserted into curriculum as a relevancy objective. Nor can it be included as activities without teachings of the traditional context and history, both of which require persons who have such knowledge and lived experienced. Further, attempting to plan for such lessons for students in formal classrooms would present a whole other set of difficulties around who is to teach, what is the appropriate setting, who decides on the content, environment, etc.

The question of whether "culture" is referring to spirituality (belief systems, values, philosophies, worldview), social aspects of daily life (foods, economics, dress, relationships), or other aspects of peoples' lives such as health, psychology, etc. must also be considered by educators who are looking to improve student achievement through recognition and inclusion of "culture" in school curriculum and programs.

When I think about what the participants told me about not including "culture" in the school, I do not interpret this to mean that they do not want Cree content in the daily lessons of their children. The interviewees were clear in that they wanted higher educational achievement for their children. I believe it is important that this message does not get interpreted as a statement that "culture" as an important part of identity is to be ignored in the schooling process. In listening to these persons, both what was said and unsaid, and based on my own experiences as an Aboriginal teacher, I take this to mean that "culture" is not to be presented as a substitute for achievement in the school context.

The participants noted that the school is about achievement in a particular form of learning, and in this case, we are being told that the Cree culture ought only to be used to enhance that academic learning experience. Other significant outcomes of culture such as personal and social identity are not perceived to be a primary part of the school objectives but interviewees reiterated that identity ought not to be negatively impacted by the schooling, experience. This leads to a very important implication: a classroom teacher has to be competent and knowledgeable in the identification and capacity to work with those aspects of culture that will impact identity development in Aboriginal children and youth.

Returning to the classroom, I will be more conscious when I am including Cree cultural content that the spiritual aspects of culture are embedded in daily life. This fact alone cautions me in how I carry out my regular teaching activities of adapting curriculum and planning relevant programs for my Cree students. Finally, from this work, I have experienced the potential for tremendous learning when parents and community members are invited to engage with educators to communicate, collaborate, and break down the barriers that exist in both community and school for the benefit of the children.

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APPENDIX A: Education Reports Reviewed by the Royal Commission

Excellence in Education: Improving Aboriginal Education in New Brunswick (1992)

Closing the Gap: The Native Indian Students' Achievement Studies in New Brunswick (1991)

Literacy for Metis and Non-Status Indian Peoples: A National Statistic (1991)

You took My Talk: Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment. Fourth report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990)

Breaking Barriers: Report of the Task Force on Access for Black and Native People (Nova Scotia, 1987)

Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of our Future (Assembly of First Nations, 1988)

Native Education in Alberta: Alberta Native Peoples' Views on Native Education (1987)

Final Report: Working Group on Native Education, Training and Employment (Alberta, 1987)

Kwiya: Towards New Partnership in Education (Yukon, 1987)

Speaking Out: Consultations and Survey of Yukon Native Languages: Planning Visibility, Growth (1986)

Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages (Northwest Territories, 1986)

Improved Program Delivery: Indians and Natives Study Team Report to the Task Force on Program Review (The Nielsen Task Force Report, 1985)

Inner City Dropout Study (Saskatchewan, 1985)

Education Equity: A Report on Native Indian Education in Saskatchewan (1985)

Indian Education: Everyone's Concern (New Brunswick, 1984)

Learning Tradition and Change (Northwest Territories, 1983)

Indian Control of Indian Education (1972)

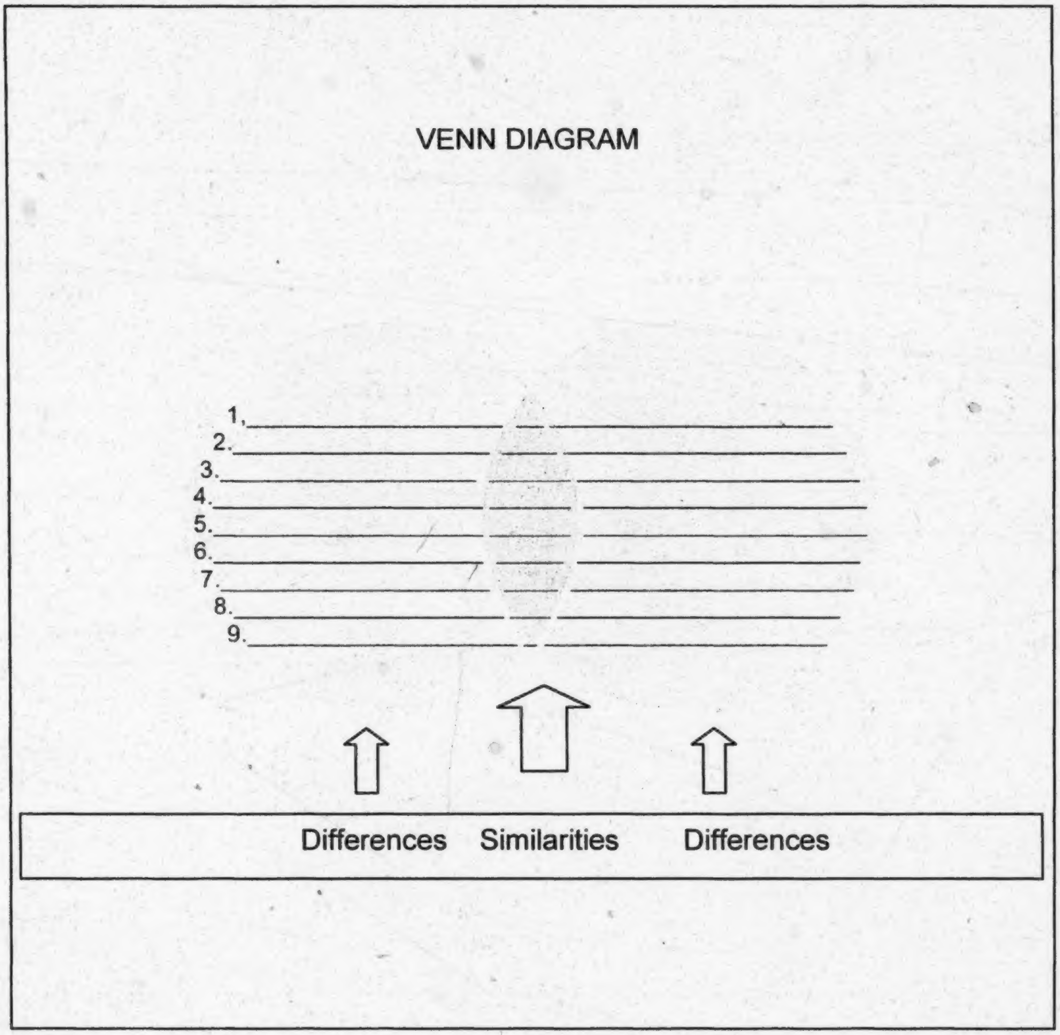
Minutes and Proceeding and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1967-68 and 1968-1969 (1971)

Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada (the Hawthorn Report, 1996)

Review of the Post Secondary Student Assistance Program of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1989)

Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post Secondary Education for Native Learners (British Columbia, 1990)

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE OF A VENN DIAGRAM


VENN DIAGRAM
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
Differences
Similarities
Differences

APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE OF A PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH

According to the Alberta Teachers' Association's ([ATA] 2003) *Healthy Interactions* project, problem solving needs to be based, first, on moving parties from a position-based stance to interest-based decision making. A position-based stance is one in which there is an attitude of "me" versus "you" or "them" or there is a winner and a loser. People get stuck in their own viewpoints because each of them feels that his/her solution or position is obviously the right one. On the other hand, interest-based decision making is based on a win-win outcome for all parties. It is "us" versus the problem or issue. The people look for mutual benefit, and the issues are just that—issues; they are not taken personally. People are open to various possible solutions that might come up. Communication is open and authentic, and contact is maintained even through disagreement.

Once the parties involved move from a positional stance and search for common interests, then communication and collaboration can occur. This cooperative approach towards problem solving seeks to resolve surface and underlying conflicts, accept differences, build on commonalities, and meet the interests and needs of the parties to the greatest possible degree.

The process of interest-based problem solving encourages the development of different dynamics, such as a perception of equilibrium between the parties, lessening of the tension between the parties occurs, respect for each other, clarification of concrete and abstract aspects of various ideas and concepts because individual parties' perceptions of the same idea or concept may be quite different, and the consideration of more options as a result of a deeper and clearer understanding of the other interests (ATA, 2003). The community's moving forward and designing a school program to a point at which the community supports it require dealing with this barrier.